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# Integrated knowledges, integrated publics?

Classificatory practices, boundary crossings, and public space at The Hive, Worcester

By

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of**

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Finally, thank you to everyone at The Hive. Your enthusiasm and openness with my project is matched by your enthusiasm and commitment to The Hive as a whole. Thank you for accommodating me.

## **Declaration**

I declare that the contents of this thesis are my own work, and that no material within has been submitted for a degree at any other university.



## Abstract

This thesis is an ethnography of one library, The Hive (Worcester), and asks the question: What does the story and daily life of The Hive tell us about the challenges facing public knowledge, public education and public space in Britain today? The study contributes to an understanding of public space in contemporary Britain through an exploration of this simultaneously unique and emblematic institution which sits at the meeting point of many other processes and institutions of public life.

As a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) between the University of Worcester and Worcestershire County Council, the library brings together two institutions of public life under one roof in an ambitious integration project. As such, it brings into proximity questions of public goods, public space and public education. The library therefore sheds light on the complexities and contradictions of appealing to groups like “the public” and “the university” in contemporary Britain.

The ethnography examines this one project as a container of interlocking processes related to the privatisation of public space, education, and the library profession under the period of austerity. My ethnography followed a slow and inventive methodology which focused on engagement with methods of dwelling, doodling and describing. In analysis, I engage with The Hive through three “lenses”: institutional, professional, and affective. I argue that threads of classification and classificatory practices interplay with ideas of “worth” throughout these lenses, at the levels of policy, work practices, and encounter on the library floor. As such, one of the thesis’ contributions is to our understanding of public space as a site of negotiation.

My thesis further contributes to fields of sociology concerning public life, higher education, and ethnographic methodologies by engaging theories of affect and labour with an empirical study. By embracing messiness and rescinding control I argue it becomes possible to sense and explore how the ostensibly limiting structures that dominate public life – such as PFIs, Higher Education, Councils – interplay with affective encounters and events to create an institution with both hopeful and fractious affects.

# Chapter 1: From “the library” to “this library”

## Introducing The Hive: a walkthrough

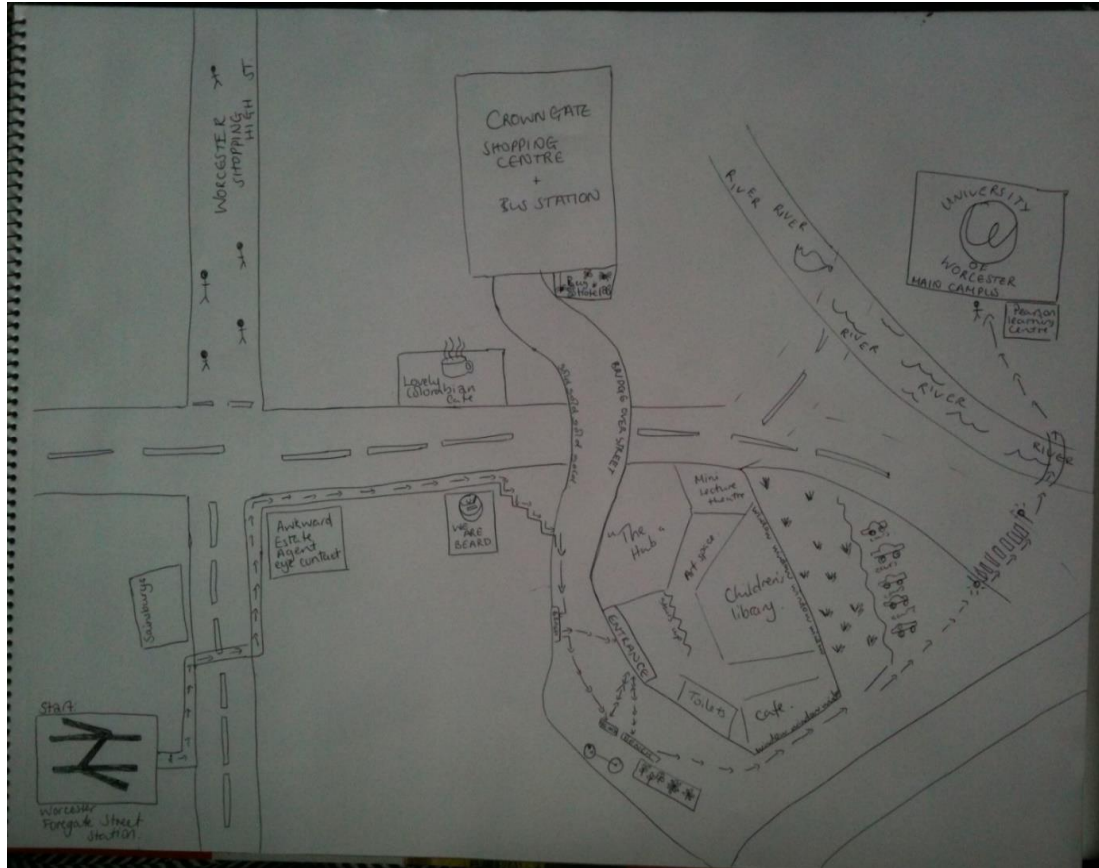


FIGURE 1

The Hive is a multi-million-pound Private Finance Initiative (PFI) that brings together the University of Worcester’s library with Worcester County Council’s public one. Before introducing the thesis concerns and context, I will describe the walk I have drawn above in the format of a walk-through. The intention here is to ground the ethnography that follows both spatially and personally within the city of Worcester. The walk-through here is preliminary and will be revisited in chapter six, but initially I seek to take you through my sensorial and emotional reactions to arriving at The Hive. The drawing above shows my route, with the little arrows going along the roads and up the steps to The Hive, to various benches, and sometimes over the river to the main University campus. It is a map drawn from memory, and I have only marked on key landmarks for me during the fieldwork.

*Having made journeys back to Worcester many times since leaving the city at eighteen, I knew before my fieldwork started how to get from Worcester Foregate*

*Street Station to The Hive. But if I hadn't, I would have seen it labelled on Google Maps as an "innovative library for public and students...an architect-designed building with golden cladding"<sup>1</sup>. After descending from the stairs of one of only two platforms of this small nineteenth century station, I turn left and walk along Foregate Street, past the mini Tesco where a homeless man tends to sit with his dog. I cross the road and turn right onto Shaw Street. Depending on the time of day I make these trips, different crowds dominate the pedestrianised area of the High Street the other side of the Junction. It feels mostly brisk and upmarket: several Estate Agents line this stretch of street, as well as a large hotel with a swimming pool which pumps a mild but surprisingly pervasive smell of chlorine into the air as I pass it. Worcester Royal Grammar School is just down the road, and the blazered confidence of many of its pupils congregates in the pedestrianised area from the early afternoon. I recall the one and only time I'd been through its gilded entry gates being when my state high school hockey team – Pershore – got hopelessly thrashed there. I will revisit it with The Hive's Community Outreach librarian later in the year and will feel the same skin-level prickle of discomfort.*

*From this point on the corner of Shaw Street the gold sheet panels on the roof of The Hive library are already visible above the line of the other buildings. The Google-Maps-feted gold cladding is both confident and soft, the effect of seven years' weathering having taken the sharp edge off its brashness. It is not right in the centre of this small city, but is close enough, and bright enough, to be stumbled upon very quickly.*

*After a few minutes walking I pass the Colombian café on the opposite side of the road. It is at this lively café, noisy with Latin American radio and staff speaking Spanish, that I will meet most of the librarians I interview for this thesis. This, and the several other bougie coffee shops that have sprung up in Worcester were definitely not around ten years ago, and it's a favourite with Hive staff. When I suggest to my interviewees that we meet there rather than talk in their workplace I get several responses along the lines of, "YES! Any excuse to go there!"*

*The Hive can be approached at two different levels and is nestled in the nook of the small ring road system that carries multiple lanes of cars through Worcester on a one-*

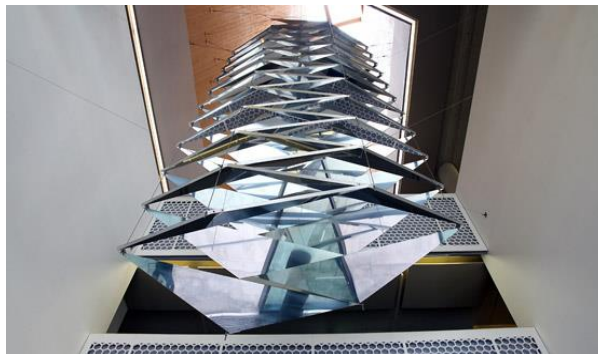
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<sup>1</sup>The Hive on Google Maps <https://tinyurl.com/y6mtetcl>

way system. From where I am standing “floor zero” is visible, but the main entrance is the next level up, where the large outdoor space is and sliding double doors are. Approaching it as I have means climbing some steep steps on the right-hand side of the street, next to a graphic design company called “We are Beard”. Their logo is a close-up cartoon of a hipster beard, and it protrudes from the side of the office on a proud, pub style sign.

The steps lead to the large, open paved area in front of The Hive. The paving slabs match the stone on the bottom half of the building, before the gold sheets begin. I could bypass the building and turn left along a short footbridge that goes over the street I just walked along, past one of those “bug hotels”, and into the mini shopping centre-come-bus station where I’d catch the 350 back to my home in Flyford Flavell as a teenager. Or I could continue right, and reach the ring road and the river, following a tow path that, after fifteen minutes, would take me to the main University of Worcester Campus in an area of Worcester called St John’s. It is on this campus that the university’s “old library” remains, having been converted into a student-only 24/7 study space since The Hive’s opening in 2012.

Turning towards the entrance, I walk towards the glass and the door slides open. There is a vestibule area of around four metres before a second sliding door. Inside the doorway the left-hand side of the wall is a busy jostling of prizes and plaques,



**FIGURE 2**

signalling the success of the building architecturally and by library bodies. On the opposite side of these celebrations, a solitary, totally transparent and inconspicuous plaque tells us in barely legible grey font that “The Hive is a Public

Private Partnership with Galliford Try completed January 2012”. Above my head is a silver sculpture called the “kaleidoscope” by the artist Robert Orchardson (2012) (Figure 2) which hangs from the top floor ceiling, and dangles through holes built into the floors above. The first time I read the caption, which is on the wall next to all the award plaques, I was surprised that it sounded so political, and with how much it resonated with my own initial interest in the project:

*“Orchardson was particularly struck by the library’s guiding inspiration that ‘learning’ and attendant cultural processes of exploration, finding out, thinking, imagining, inventing and knowing are the province of all citizens – and to be nurtured and celebrated accordingly. The Hive, in these terms, he saw as a declaration of hope and possibility, and a rare project of enlightenment at a time of national difficulty.” (Orchardson, 2012)*

*While “a time of national difficulty” is certainly ambiguous – which new time, and whose difficulty? – I liked that there was a gentle nod of recognition in a civic space like The Hive that public education and citizenship is political. That idea of education and “places of learning” (Ellsworth, 2005) being the “province of all citizens” sums up so much about the promise of The Hive, and the reflective and light giving qualities of the sculpture’s mirrored metal slices mimics its myriad creative possibilities. It reminded me of hearing that Stuart Hall had celebrated the library named after him at INIVA by laughingly describing it as “this subversive thing...quietly throbbing away” (Hall, in Back, 2010).*

*At the same time, “Kaleidoscope”’s angular and disorientating nature, with flashes of light but also shade and edginess, felt inadvertently suggestive of the fractiousness that comes from making such a promise in a society where education has become so routinely removed from “all citizens”. Hanging at the threshold of the building, and the threshold of this thesis, the sculpture and its contrasting connotations is an emblem of the ambitious but complex constitution of the project itself.*

*I walk into the building, and natural light pours in from the windows above the central atrium. The floor has a spacious feel, with sections blending one into the next without doorways. To the right are toilets, and I sit on a nearby sofa one day to note how common it is for people to come in just to use them – a public facility crisis in its own right (Greed, 2019; Hatherley, 2019). Then further to the right there is the café, where all of its exterior walls are windows. A strip of bar-style high tables lines the windows so people-watching for people in the café, looking outside, is comfortable. Straight ahead of the doorway is a welcoming archway into the children’s library, which is accessible from the front of the doorway or through the café. The children’s library has a bank of buggies, parked like sardines, whenever one of the noisy toddler events is on. The architectural theme of transparency extends into the children’s area. “Book*

*nooks” pepper the interior wall by the archway: wonky windows into the walls with soft fabric at the bottom, which kids can climb in to read (or not).*

*Returning to the main entrance, and to the left of the building is “The Hub”, the council services arm within The Hive. It is, again, open plan, and desks staffed by council employees attend to the usually very short queue of people seeking advice or trying to pay bills.*

*The building’s levels are connected by a wide, open, wooden stairway with the light filled atrium at the top. Halfway up I meet the second floor; home to Worcester Archive, Worcester Archaeological services, the back-of-house staff offices, the business library and lounge (where “business breakfasts” take place, encouraging local business owners to network), and several bookable meeting rooms. These meeting rooms can be hired by members of the public or used by students and are prioritised for students during peak times of the academic year.*

*Up again is the third floor, and this is where I spend most of my time: the main library. I will return to this area throughout the thesis in more detail, but at this point will just describe the simple journey I make. As I walk from the top of the stairs I see a staff station, where library customer service assistants answer directional queries and add new library members to the system. To my right is the “Ask the librarian desk” where academic librarians sit and take reference enquiries. Threading around the atrium is a border of PCs, open to the public and students. It’s very rare to see the PCs packed, and those that sit at these ones are frequently “regulars” who have their habitual seats and habitual activities: catching up on TV and watching YouTube is common. Radiating outwards from the open atrium are parallel stripes of bookshelves. The left-hand side is where the fiction is, with non-fiction from both partners of the Hive interspersing the rest. At the other side of the floor to the stair opening is another block of toilets and the doorway leading to the fourth floor.*

*The fourth floor is an atmospheric step-change. Unlike the rest of the building where one section bleeds into the next and is accessed through wide or non-existent borders and high spacious ceilings, a fire escape door and dark stairwell takes you to the quiet loft of this designated “silent” zone. The stairs have the feeling of a “back stairway”, with cement walls and metal handrails, not one designed for public use. It doubles up as the refuge point for emergencies. The fourth floor itself is small, about a quarter of the size of the other floors. The ceilings are low, and the windows are high and*



*thin. Rules for conduct appear here which do not in the rest of the building: no food, no drink, no talking. Locked glass cabinets in the centre of the room display old books. Print journals line the walls, and PhD theses from Worcester University students are available to be browsed.*

*Windows from the fourth floor open – automatically, quietly buzzing into action thanks to the passive energy intelligence of The Hive’s building - out onto the city’s skyline. Looking out from these windows I take in the city of Worcester and reflect on where I am standing. The ridge of the Malvern Hills encloses the scene, and the city’s several churches and cathedral punctuate an otherwise bucolic skyline. The city below stutters with a quiet complexity which mirrors that of The Hive; the proximity of academic, elite, precarious and public realities are eked out on the pavement and etched into the bookshelves.*

## **[Re]Introducing The Hive: its facts**

This thesis is an ethnography of one library, The Hive (Worcester), and asks the question: What does the story and daily life of The Hive tell us about the challenges facing public knowledge, public education and public space in Britain today? Through close examination of what is a simultaneously unique and emblematic institution, the study contributes to our understanding of how ideas around what is “public” and “academic” (re)create public space. After formally introducing The Hive and the city of Worcester, I describe my conceptual approach to researching The Hive as a “container” of wider processes of public life. Next, I consider the key concepts engaged with in the thesis, which centre around classification, classificatory practices, convergence, and worth. Finally, I summarise the arguments to follow and break down the thesis’ structure and contributions.

In order to fully explain the central premise and aims of the research, it is first essential to provide some headline explanations of The Hive and the city of Worcester. Many of these points will be picked back up and explored in detail in chapters to follow; however, in light of the singularity of The Hive’s organisational structure, an initial brief overview is warranted.

Opening its doors in 2012 after a ten-year planning process, The Hive is the result of a collaboration between the University of Worcester and Worcestershire County Council. The multiuse space consists of an integrated library, a children’s library, the county public archive service, the council services “Hub”, and archaeology service. The Hive replaces the city’s former main public library at Foregate Street, and the University’s main library which was

known as “The Peirson Library” on its St John’s campus. The Peirson building has been repurposed into a 24/7 study space, exclusively for University of Worcester students.

Although a collaboration between two public bodies, an additional component of The Hive is the fact it is made possible by a PFI. The Hive’s PFI contract – which a manager describes as “using private money to make public buildings” (Worcestershire County Council, 2016) - was administered through central government and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funding, and completed by Galliford Try Plc, a construction and development company (Dalton, Elkin and Hannaford, 2006, p. 541). The contract will last for 25 years and is shared by the parties in agreement with 70% being paid – and eventually owned - by Worcestershire County Council, and 30% by the University.

Staff from the respective partners were invited to work at The Hive and staffing the integrated library is centred on formal and informal convergence. In chapters four and five I explore the classificatory practices and cultural outcomes of work integration at The Hive. In brief, the integration of staffing works along the lines that all The Hive staff members are employed by one or other “partner”. In other words, “The Hive” is not an employer, only The University of Worcester and Worcestershire County Council are. Despite this maintenance of difference, work teams in The Hive are generally a mixture of university and council employees. For example, the “customer service assistants” who work on the library floor are a mixture of university and council employed staff, managed by Team Leaders who equally might be employed by either. Crucially, the contracts by which staff members are employed are not identical, despite sometimes having identical roles.

The Hive’s main library - described above on floor 3 - contains interfiled books from both university and county council stock; its staff are employed by one or other “partner” but maintain a “singular customer service standard”. The partners manage two separate and divergent budgets. As such, there is a *simultaneous integration* – the books are not organised in a “university” or “public” area; they are speckled across the bookshelves, cheek by jowl – and a *maintained difference*. While the provenance of many books is indiscernible at a glance, many of those bought by the university have visible blue stickers on the spine, denoting that they are considered “High Demand” for students, and therefore may only be borrowed one at a time by the public (in contrast to the six available otherwise). This level of financial, spatial, and professional integration allows The Hive to be termed the first of its kind in Europe. Because of the interdependency of the partners, The Hive is seen as one possible response to both the crisis facing Public Libraries in the UK (Goulding, 2013) and the



increasing requirement for Universities to demonstrate public engagement while also facing tight financial circumstances (Allen, Downes and Keene, 2018).

### **Worcester: an everyday city**

Worcester is the county city of Worcestershire in the West Midlands. The latest census data (2011) shows Worcestershire to be demographically quite atypical compared both with the wider West Midlands and also England and Wales. Specifically, Worcestershire's population is aging and migrating (within the UK) at higher rates than the average: 16% of its population is aged 20-34 compared with the national and regional average of 20%. 33% of the population is aged 55 or over, compared with 28% nationally and regionally. Although internal migration is said to be average overall, a higher than average proportion of university aged young people leave the county of Worcestershire, adding to its overall aging profile (Rice, 2013, p. 8). Compared with the rest of England Worcestershire is also much less multicultural: 92.4% white British compared to 79.9% nationally. Its largest non-British minority is Eastern European.

Despite this atypicality, Worcester has been used to function as a metaphor by politicians. As part of Blair's New Labour electoral campaign of 1997, the "Worcester Woman" was evoked alongside the "Mondeo Man" as key swing voters for the party's more centrist direction. The "Worcester woman" was a "hardworking" mother of two and characterised as someone without party political allegiances, but someone who would "break faith with the Tories...based on the belief that New Labour would enhance her family's quality of life" (Riddel, 2014).

These features of both the city of Worcester and the University of Worcester raise questions about The Hive's suitability as a lens through which to provoke broader questions about public life in Britain. It is certainly the case that larger universities and larger cities would face some very different challenges were they to approach a project like The Hive.

In defence of choosing The Hive and choosing Worcester I say several things initially, many of which will be elaborated on below. Firstly, I choose it because it is there: The Hive is unique in its ambition and level of integration. Secondly, the relatively small size (just over 10,000 students) and youth of its ambitious university (it was granted full university status in 2005) sits in interesting conversation with its public position in the city. Unlike cities which are engulfed by their universities – as several Russell Group ones are – Worcester is not defined by its university. Finally, in choosing The Hive, my thesis gently nudges for attention to be

paid to centres of living and learning that are not the huge and diverse urban centres of large cities like London, Birmingham, Manchester.

### Conversations from general to singular

Having foregrounded some of the practicalities around my research site, I will now state the angle from which I initially approached this research, some of the political and philosophical premises that are central to my position, and argue for attention to be turned to the library as a site through which to contribute to a wider conversation about life in contemporary Britain.

The Hive, then, is an ambitious project which sits at the intersection of complicated and competing processes, pressures, and narratives around the role and function of both public services and Higher Education in British society. It also provokes reflections on the incursion of private finance into public processes, as well as different modes of work and professionalism, as several institutional and professional cultures, histories, and trajectories coalesce under one roof. It is part of the argument of this thesis that by looking at how the Hive works I can speak to a larger conversation about how public institutions work in contemporary Britain.

I am essentially interested in public life and public goods. I consider public life as consisting of many factors and processes: it is about how we learn together, create together and interact and live together (Goffman, 1972, p. xviii). Relatedly, public education is provided at many levels and is foundational to the creation of the public. Public knowledge is a record of the things we have learned together, and public space is where this all happens. I came to the first question of the thesis, “What does the story and daily life of the Hive tell us about the challenges facing public knowledge, public education and public space in the UK today?”, from the position that at this point in time these three aspects of public life are in question. They are increasingly being privatised. Things that have been held and delivered in common are being sold and owned in new and unprecedented ways.

Both the public library and the university in Britain have, historically, been places intimately – if imperfectly - involved with these three aspects of public life. They are places where public knowledge is stored and made accessible. They are places where public education is carried out. And finally, they are public spaces.

My research into The Hive fits within the context of an increasingly reconfigured welfare state in which, beginning from the 1970s, education as a social right has been reconceived as an

individual good (Holmwood and Bhambra, 2012). As seemingly identical agencies belonging to different but connected institutions, academic and public libraries are illustrative of the pulling together and pulling apart of public and higher education more generally. Both sets of libraries are seen to have similar functions in terms of providing space and access to resources (Shapiro, 2015) yet have often come to be seen as serving divergent communities. Their fates have also been in tandem: the extension of the system of higher education following the Robbins report of 1963 (Holmwood, 2011, p. 6) came just one year before The Public Libraries Act (1964) whereby public libraries were enshrined as a statutory requirement for councils to provide (Muddiman, 2006, p. 84). The decline of Public libraries in the UK – 127 closed last year (Page, 2018) - has also coincided with profound transformations within the Higher Education Sector: the introduction of the “impact agenda”, the removal of direct government funding to arts, humanities and social sciences and the trebling of student tuition fees (Holmwood, 2018, p. 511).

The scarcity of existing research that deals with the non-university community’s engagement in the UK university through the academic library is potentially testament to several things: firstly, it suggests that universities have moved stealthily from public to private projects to such an extent that their public function is no longer readily recognised. Secondly, it suggests that sociologists have overlooked an issue of interest right on their doorstep. Finally, the relative lack of theoretical, philosophical, or even values-based work in Library and Information Studies/Science (LIS) (Leckie, Given and Buschman, 2010) has arguably allowed academic libraries to be moved out of a wider understanding of public education, such that no one noticed when the security gates came in.

Physical access to academic libraries has decreased with the widening marketisation of universities and represents a political enclosure. The fact that security gates have become an unquestioned feature of university libraries and that this has had a dramatic impact on public access to public goods (assuming HE is a public resource) is under-researched. A New York Times article from 2002 (Dunn, 2002) explains how security gates and turnstiles have exploded in popularity in business buildings since 9/11. According to Dunn, gates are more to do with psychological rather than physical comfort or security and it seems logical to think that increasing cultural paranoia and a propensity for privacy and enclosure might be contributing to their ubiquity in university libraries. Book theft, which is said to account to 3% of a library collection per year (Harwell, 2014, p. 55), can be remedied - as it is in public libraries - through alarmed gates that don’t have turnstiles. The concurrent move online by academic journals, with physical journals consequently moving off the library shelves, means

that previously public knowledge is now almost impossible for those outside of institutions to reach. While Open-access campaigns and criticism of publishing monopolies go some way to problematise this, the material barriers that exist between public and academic communities in the UK is often only conceived in narrow concepts such as ‘outreach’ and public engagement.

### Research lenses, aims and questions

In the following work my perspective is shaped by the premises and context I have just described, and by the belief that the library is an important site in the creation and study of the public. I am claiming that The Hive in particular is a worthy object of study for two reasons: firstly, in its status as a possible way of keeping hold of the notions of public space, education and knowledge in a new institutional form. The Hive is a response to the constraints facing both local authorities and universities. Secondly, and more importantly to my research, The Hive is a space which brings into proximity many of the processes that are already objects of research and concern, such as Higher Education, Public Libraries, privatisation and professionalisation. The unusual proximity of public library concerns and academic library concerns at The Hive allows the negotiation, occasional friction, and occasional joyful collision of the priorities, practicalities, and values to be brought into sharper relief and to enrich a snapshot of British public life as a whole.

The ethnography that follows examines this one project through three different “lenses”: institutional, professional, and affective. I first consider The Hive at an institutional level and examine it as a container of larger interlocking processes related to the privatisation of public space, education, and the library profession during the period of austerity. Secondly, I look at the way The Hive as a project is made and remade through the divergent professional and professionalising discourses of academic librarianship and public librarianship. Finally, I narrow the lens to The Hive as local and specific, and I pay attention to the multi-use space at the level of affect, “ordinary” human interaction, and material classification. This allows me to trace the negotiation between everyday experience and The Hive’s stated strategy.

I have organised the lenses in interaction with the following aim and research questions:

Aim: To examine, through an ethnography of The Hive the limits and possibilities of integrated knowledge, education and space in the context of public and academic library crises

- What does the story and daily life of The Hive tell us about the challenges facing public knowledge, education and space in the UK today?

- How do understandings of the diverging processes of librarian professional identity and customer-service professionalisation interplay with understandings of academic and public knowledge, and what insights does this give us into the evolving functions of HE, librarianship, and public space?
- How does The Hive's "integration project" (of knowledge, space, and work), play out affectively at The Hive?

My year-long fieldwork followed a slow and inventive methodology which focused on dwelling, drawing and describing within the space as a student, a researcher, and a librarian. Combining material gathered through semi-structured interviews with staff, ethnographic engagements with library users, document analysis, and doodlings of spaces, I trace how different classificatory practices and boundary crossings based on notions of "worth" play out in the space in relation to the meetings of communities involved.

In the section that follows I elaborate on this point by describing The Hive as a container for public processes in proximity, before developing the concepts of classification, worth, and boundary work which shape the thesis' affective analysis.

### **The Hive as a container of processes**

I study The Hive ethnographically and consider it both a singular and an emblematic study in contemporary Britain. In choosing this methodology and in focusing on its affective dimensions as they interplay with material infrastructures, I have played around with different terms for what The Hive represents as a site of study. It was heartening to see in recent PhD theses on public libraries by Katherine Robinson (2014), Alice Corble (2019) and Esther Julia Ulrike Hitchen (2019) that they had clearly asked themselves similar questions, and had opted for treating the library as a "window" (Robinson, 2014, p. 1), a "diagnostic viewfinder or barometer" (Corble, 2019, p. 4) and a "microcosm" (Hitchen, 2019, p. 5), through which to explore public life more generally. While we are all grappling with the idea of "the library" as a site of sociological significance and share a fundamental commitment to the idea of ethnographic imagination, we have all opted for slightly different terms to engage with these processes.

As such, I am employing the terminology of container but am tying into it the thinking and contributions of others. Container has three key attributes. Firstly, I use it whilst emphasising the point that the container is not sealed and rigid, but that its contents (The Hive, the public, the academic) are exposed and malleable. The Hive understood as a container has the

capacity to overflow without being fully free-floating; it has a holding quality where wider social processes converge and coalesce, but they are often fleeting, moving, over spilling and contradicting their assigned roles or expectations. In this sense, container acts conceptually similarly to the Deleuzean-Guattarian concept of “assemblage”, which has been defined as “a mode of ordering heterogeneous entities so that they work together for a certain time” (Müller, 2015, p. 28). Kathleen Stewart’s engagement with “the unfinished world” as a “composition” was also important in orienting me here. She describes how particular moments, occasions, and social processes have revelatory potential without seeking to explain the way the world works:

*In other words, it's a composition - a poesis - and one that literally can't be seen as a simple repository of systemic effects imposed on an innocent world but has to be traced through the generative modalities of impulses, daydreams, ways of relating, distractions, strategies, failures, encounters, and worldings of all kinds (Stewart, 2008, p. 73).*

However, the second attribute of container speaks to the physicality of The Hive, and even and especially to the discomfort that The Hive must hold. Despite the fleeting intangibilities of how worth and boundaries in the space are negotiated— which may spill over the top or be made invisible within it – The Hive is also both a physical building in bricks and mortar (or wood and golden cladding?), and a financially strictly bounded institution in terms of its PFI contract. As has been mentioned, part of the value of The Hive as a sociological site is that its integrated structure (financial, physical, professional, material) forces together in proximity institutions otherwise considered separately. As will be developed in the chapters that follow, this proximity can be both fractious and convivial, but an essential feature is that its negotiation is unavoidable. So, container aims to speak to that.

The final dimension of container thinking overlaps with the open-but-bounded dimensions just mentioned but also relates to the writing of this thesis. Container here speaks to the idea of difficult conversations and reparative writing (Sedgwick, 2003; Gibson-Graham, 2006). In terms of The Hive, I argue throughout the thesis and particularly in chapter six that it is a site of negotiation around classifications and (self and projected) notions of “worth”. The Hive can be a container to fractious and unpleasant meetings, but also ultimately provides a managed surface on which those meetings can happen. Without arguing that this function is the panacea for negative processes associated with modern public life – inequality, loneliness, and so on – I will offer reflections on this feature as a positive element of the

building, and a powerful social potential. Finally, container is also a term commonly used in activist and mediation groups to denote the conscious facilitation of complex and sometimes emotionally charged conversations (Stephansen, 2019). In a sense, I would like this thesis to be read in that way, whereby critical engagement with The Hive, its limitations and possibilities, are read as positive agonistic engagement, rather than criticism or straightforward judgment.

### Concepts of classification

In order to build up a picture of The Hive as a site of complex negotiation, I employ a set of conceptual terms throughout the chapters that follow. They have been borrowed and moulded from other theories and theorists, and I will explain them briefly now. The main concepts which refrain through the thesis are all connected to building a rich picture of the nature of classification. Using classification as an umbrella, I develop further concepts relating to its active, ongoing, and negotiated nature. These are: classificatory practices, classification/convergence, boundary work and worth. I call on these concepts and discuss them and their affective intersections across the three lenses of the analysis (institutional, professional, and affective). I will now define and discuss them in preparation, noting how they arose in fieldwork, and were elaborated along the way.

### Classifications and classificatory practices

The Hive's institutional structure and promise is predicated on presenting an equality, a blending, between the university and the Council: the academic and the public. Despite openness and inclusivity being watchwords of the project, formal processes of classification are unavoidable in the space, and these classifications have material consequences. Although often unavoidable, classifications are often overlooked. As Bowker and Leigh Star (1999, p. 5) have said, "we stand for the most part in formal ignorance of the social and moral order created by these invisible, potent entities". I will discuss in more detail the affective charge of combining the council and the university's books together under one system (Dewey Decimal) in chapter six, and at this point in the introduction will focus more on the principles of classification as they relate to less obvious places in The Hive.

Classification and classificatory practices are key to this thesis, and I treat them as connected but not identical. Classifications are the formal, written and agreed, "solid" face of classificatory practices. Any library is a space intrinsically based upon some forms of classification in this sense, both in terms of its central function of providing access to organised knowledge (Ranganathan, 1931), and – I argue – because of the interaction

between those human made and inherently imperfect classifications and the people interacting with them. Library classifications are not benign or neutral, and have classifying effects (Leigh Star and Bowker, 1998; Drabinski, 2018). In the case of The Hive, this lies in the organisation of the collections and the organisation of its publics: university going, or not-university going. Membership of one classification of the public has material effects: how many books can be borrowed, the price of printing or photocopying, access to The Hive's meeting rooms, café discounts. But as I explore, at times it also has less rule-based effects: whose noise is acceptable, what activities are appropriate, whose needs are heard.

In contrast to *classification*, using the term *classificatory practices* speaks to my understanding of the “ongoing-ness” of classification (Pereira, 2017, p. 8), its live negotiation, and the fact that often classifications are enacted by people at different times for different purposes, rather than being static and coherent. In this thesis, this will become clear in discussions of the differences between professional identity work among university employed “academic librarians”, and front-of-house customer service assistants. Margaret Wetherall's endorsement of “practice” as a useful way of thinking through “forms of order” while also recognising “‘could be otherwise’ qualities” of classifications and categories (Wetherell, 2012, p. 3) dovetails with my own use of practice.

Differentiating between “classification” and “classificatory practices” is not to argue that one is static and instrumental, while the other is fluid and subjective, just that classificatory practices are the live negotiations of classifications based on a range of knowledge and feelings. Classificatory practice also appeals to the interconnectedness of classifications and their differently affective complexions: in the chapters that follow I describe different instances of classificatory practices at The Hive and how they shape the space as a site of negotiation. These are not limited to notions of the library infrastructure, but also connect with understandings of professional identity, divergent notions of worth (discussed below), belonging, even confidence.

### **Boundary work**

The notion of classificatory practices precedes and intersects with “boundary work”, another term that recurs in the thesis. This thesis rests on the notion that different types of classificatory practices abound in the negotiation of public space. These relate to types of publics and their varying senses of belonging and worths, sets of knowledges and how they are appealed to, to suit different groups, and sets of staff. Boundary work and boundary crossings (Nippert-Eng, 2010, p. 11) feed into this context and are mobilised in this thesis to



refer to the changeable and negotiated complexions of these classifications. Ylijoki speaks to “boundary work” in HE and makes the point that these boundaries are not rigid or set in stone but are mobilised at different points and by different people and carry connotations and values beyond the work ostensibly referred to. In her study of work practices and occupational identity of academics, she says “boundary work between work time and private time does not only concern time, but ultimately also the moral grounding and basic meaning of academic work and the university as an institution” (Ylijoki, 2013, p. 252). In a similar way, boundary work around what is library work, what is a legitimate reason for being in a library, what behaviour should be private and not played out in a library, all concern interpretation.

### Classification/convergence

Classification/convergence develops from classification, classificatory practices, and boundary work/crossings to describe a scenario whereby desires to flatten and bridge differences – between institutions, knowledges, types of worker – precipitates other forms of classification to be more starkly revealed. Not only was this process - which I will elaborate below and in empirical detail in chapters four, five, and six - unavoidable, it was also intrinsic to the integration project functioning smoothly at all.

It struck me while interacting with parties at The Hive that frequently there were different layers of integration, and that no sooner was one separation bridged (convergence), than a new one appeared (classification). To give a brief simplified example, in presenting and inculcating a blanket culture of “We are all The Hive” across the different staffing structures, the need for some to differentiate themselves from others sometimes appeared more urgent than if difference had been acknowledged in the first place. This shifting dance of convergence/classification takes shape temporally: the feelings held by parties within the integration evolve over time, as personal and collective lived experience of the project affects perception, but also as the wider social and political landscape changes. Such changes would include the governmental changes made to Higher Education during the time between The Hive’s planning stages and today – seven years on, the wider austerity/precarity landscape (even in Worcester) meaning other public services and spaces have been threatened. Processes of convergence and classification relate to many things in The Hive: management of organisations (University, county council), their groups of users, groups of workers and their work traditions (contracts and responsibilities) and the integration of knowledges.

## Worth

The final concept in my classification orientated repertoire is worth. The material contradictions of The Hive as a space produced by collaborations of differences led to encounters which bubbled over into expressions of who should and should not feel comfortable there. “Worth” and worthiness came up in my fieldnotes instinctively and became a way for me to pull together some of the observations of dissonance and subtle conflict that I had become attuned to during my ethnographic visits there. I would think and write about worth when I noticed the teenage lads hanging around The Hive but never going in, when people were at pains to tell me they “never looked at the books”, when I tried to put into words the feelings I had when seeing that the printer/photocopier machines had different price lists for members of the public and members of the university. Perceptions of worth worked in communication with “classification”, but were sometimes within it, around it, propelling it, rather than defining its harder edges.

As such, I began using terminology around “worth” to describe some of these instances of visible discomfort. While “judgement” – self, and of others - might be a key characteristic of this, I often felt that these expressions were both subtler, and more self-reflective than is suggested by judgment. Behaviours of users and staff often betrayed a self-assessment of worthiness and unworthiness, rather than a straight-forward judgment on the behaviour of others. Reading Alan Bennett’s evocative description became a touchstone for thinking with worth throughout the planning, fieldwork, and writing up stages of this thesis. He describes feeling uncomfortable as a grammar schoolboy when approaching libraries and literary company:

*This resentment, which was, I suppose, somewhere mine, had to do with feeling shut out. A library, I used to feel, was like a cocktail party with everybody standing with their back to me; I could not find a way in. (Bennett, 2011, p. 3)*

As Bennett’s quotation implies, individual feelings of low self-worth, inadequacy, comparisons to others, interact with the way he feels he can be in the space, with its objects and other users. His lack of instinctive comfort is clearly class-based for him and for many others who use libraries; what he brings into this space with its material allusions to high culture affect his experience. In a similar way to Sennett and Cobb’s assessment of the inner worlds of working-class Americans who, on the face of it, have changed their class position through education or professional work, Bennett’s eventual acceptance in the library is still

tinged with self-doubt. He feels resentful but knows he has brought some of that resentment with him from his life outside the building. Joining a cocktail party might make way for a “greater set of roles in life” but it doesn’t necessarily mean “dignity” (Sennett and Cobb, 1972, p. 30).

A second quotation, this time from poet Patricia Lockwood, also spoke to an idea of worth as a descriptive concept pertinent to The Hive. Lockwood’s quotation approaches the issue from the academic knowledge side:

*The few times I snuck into a university library, hungry to dip into the books I could not find elsewhere, I felt I was about to be tackled at any moment by the police. I crept into the stacks at Washington University... and I can still feel the sharp stamp of bricks against my back as I crouched in a shadowy corner with my paper, scratching out the line “infinite white and infinite many” with the wild lawlessness and curtailed breath of someone who lives in a country where poetry is illegal (Lockwood, 2017)*

Lockwood’s reaction to being in an academic context where she was not a student shows a similarly affective response to feeling out-of-place in an academic library. In addition to the fact that, as an academic library, she is factually not allowed in on the same basis as students are, it is telling that overcoming that restriction and gaining access doesn’t stop her feeling that she doesn’t belong there. Lockwood’s feeling of criminality highlights the extent to which material barriers shape and condition emotional reactions to and interactions with the space and its objects. Because she doesn’t have the validation of an academic credential, Lockwood interacts with the material of the library as though she is not supposed to be reading it. The material she needs is not open to her anywhere else, giving her a feeling that she is not worthy of it; it is worthier than her. Still, she subverts inferiority, and the feeling of “wild lawlessness” emboldens her, makes her feel like the victor in the end, and makes her emotional engagement more vivid. While this is positive, being “barred” nevertheless conditions her comfort where some knowledge is presented as ordinarily beyond her reach.

Public space and education are riven with experiences akin to both Bennet’s and Lockwood’s. In the context of The Hive, I also felt there to be a slipperiness around what comfort and belonging in academic environments *feels* like, and how those feelings change for some and not for others. Though itself malleable and soft, I ran with “worth” as a concept through which to think about these feelings and expressions.

## **A thesis walkthrough: Arguments, contributions, and structure**

Building from these engagements with The Hive as a singular institution to a richer understanding of public space in contemporary Britain, I make several arguments in this thesis which contribute to existing debates in several connected literatures. These literatures include social research into public life and public services under austerity, and research into the so-called “crisis of higher education”. Beyond empirical contributions, my work also dovetails with the development of “live methods” in social research (Back and Puwar, 2012; Lambert, 2018), and speaks from the library to social theory through the development of my classification based conceptual framework. Though these will be outlined through the chapters that follow I will briefly outline these contributions below.

Most broadly, my research contributes to an understanding of the interconnectedness of institutions of public life. At a time when there is burgeoning research on the effects of austerity in British public life, the effects of marketisation in HE, and the effects of technology on knowledge creation, my thesis argues that one implicates the other, and provides an example of researching these interconnections. I argue that the extent to which Higher Education is experienced as a constituent part of public life should be gauged not only through research specific to university campuses, but also through research which dwells within the public spaces from which HE can be said to have retreated.

My experience at The Hive also contributes insight into the nature of public space by drawing attention to how it is formed through live negotiation around classifications and classificatory practices. I show that public space is a site of negotiation between people and material according to understandings of worth, which are themselves not fixed. This has relevance both to literatures concerning sociology of HE and to those concerning public services under austerity. The close physical proximity of two sets of publics and knowledges (the university of Worcester and the county council) serves to highlight that “public” and “academic” are not discrete, self-evident or neutral categories. Instead, appeals to classifications like “academic”, “public”, “private” and “work” are shifting and value laden, with their moving boundaries indicative of volatile assumptions of who belongs in particular spaces. The library therefore sheds light on the complexities and contradictions of appealing to groups like “the public” and “the university” in contemporary Britain.

In acknowledging and working with these understandings of interconnection and negotiation, my research enriches current debates about the crisis in HE (discussed itself in chapter two) with two key insights. Firstly, we will see the challenges faced by proponents of

public HE. The increasingly merged, straightened, and outsourced nature of many of the services provided by the county council to the general public at The Hive will be shown to sit in sometimes uncomfortable relation with the experience of an increasingly individualised and managerialised university experience. Explorations of the discomfort expressed by some members of the university community vis-a-vis members of the general public, and vice-versa, illustrate the fault lines of integration – and thereby the broader challenges facing public higher education. Secondly, I highlight the extent to which these challenges are not only about differential financial realities, but are also borne of live emotional interactions, alive in internalised senses of relational worth.

The contributions explicated on in this thesis are also methodological and theoretical. Through the multi-lens approach I have adopted I demonstrate how ethnographic methodologies can bridge institutional approaches to public space with everyday affective readings. As well as presenting a lively narrative of The Hive, these methods allow insight into the emotionality and rhythm of the space in ways which enrich analysis of the challenges faced by public space, education and knowledge. The development of my “slow methods” which include dwelling, doodling, and describing, therefore contributes to the growing field of “live” sociology (Back and Puwar, 2012).

Finally, through the development of a conceptual framework building on theories of classification I make an original contribution to sociological theory. As I explained in defining these concepts, my understanding of classification takes it to be lively and practice orientated. While being specific to the library space, I also argue classification is a broader practice of belonging and sense making, and has reach beyond the library and into a more general understanding of how public space is (re)created. Though specific to the library, my hope is that this framework illustrates the efficacy of thinking with classification and worth for topics beyond it, speaking to social theory through the insights of the library. Bringing an affective attention to classification shows how symbolic and material boundaries and groupings shape interactions and belongings.

Each of these contributions will be further explicated in the chapters that follow.

### Structure of the thesis

The final segment of this introduction to The Hive and the research describes what is coming in the chapters that follow.

In chapter two, I expand on the briefly explored situation of libraries within the landscapes of Higher Education and local government. Through interaction with literatures from sociology, sociology of HE, Library and Information Studies (LIS), and affect theory I argue that libraries should be understood as having a unique role in the organisation not only of knowledge but also of people and communities, and as such should be listened to in relation to the multiple perceived public crises. I explore the position and possibility of libraries as classifying and social spaces, and point to their treatment within the recent transformations of both Universities and Public Libraries. Engaging with affect theory generally and those writers engaged in “public feelings projects” specifically, I point to the contribution of this thesis being the bringing together of institutional and affective considerations to an empirical study like that of The Hive.

In the third chapter, I describe my approach towards slow methods which included dwelling, doodling, and describing. I discuss examples of my process with doodling as a method aimed at capturing, engaging with and reflecting on, and communicating some of the complex structures and feelings of the library. I also out myself as a “shy researcher” and present an ethnographic vignette in which I engage with the emotionality and empathetic potential of the project in such a way that it develops my methodology. Finally, I discuss my practical engagement with The Hive and how I negotiated ethical considerations both in the fieldwork and in the writing up. This includes describing how I have protected the anonymity of participants while maintaining the capacity to give faithful accounts of voices involved.

The substantive section of the thesis is organised around three large chapters (four, five and six) which I call lenses. I envisage the flow of the thesis as a funnel with a gradually narrowing focus, from broad to minute. The first of these chapters (four) is concerned with The Hive at its broadest focus and looks at the institutions involved in the integration project and the manner in which it is understood and communicated. Using documents, interviews, and personal reflections, the chapter asks, what is the integration? How is it experienced, and how might it change? This takes in the divergent expectations and realities of the space and explores the extent to which it is based both on a vulnerable promise between two stretched institutions, and on a vulnerable understanding of the “publicness” of academic knowledge and space. I engage with the affective and emotional dimension of policy documents and mission statements and I introduce the recurring theme of classification and convergence in exploration of who and what is being integrated at The Hive. I argue that its integration between “the” public, and the university is not only about people. Rather, the idea of what is public and what is university becomes what is understood as academic knowledge, and

who is worthy of that knowledge. I conclude that The Hive is better viewed as an *integration* project rather than a static *integrated* institution. I argue that The Hive is a vulnerable accommodation between asymmetric, and sometimes competing, institutional values and futures. The Hive's financial relationship to a shrinking public services landscape, and its long-term PFI contract, gives it a future-orientated temporality that makes successful integration feel always just out of reach.

Chapter five turns to the way that the Hive is structured through its staff. As I have mentioned, the project is staffed through the two involved organisations, plus outsourced staff, but is delivered as though it is "all The Hive". It asks, how do understandings of librarian professional identity, academic knowledge and professionalism in service work construct the space of The Hive by its staff, and what insights does this give us into the evolving functions of HE, librarianship, and public space? I argue that two streams of professionalisation are happening: one within what might be called the formal profession of librarianship which affects the university-employed Academic Liaison Librarians (ALLs) and is associated with the discipline of LIS. The second vein concerns the professionalisation of service work and is a more generic feature of New Public Management (NPM). This concerns a process of "appropriateness" and emotional labour and is experienced by the front-of-house "customer service assistants" (CSA). I argue that The Hive's integration project paradoxically coexists with - and almost seems to make necessary - classificatory practices around professional identity between these two groups.

Chapter six goes to ground, and experiences the space of The Hive affectively, through interaction with the material of the library – the books – and the encounters the space makes possible. I use British Artist Rachel Whiteread's plaster casts of interior spaces to think through the shelves of the library and of The Hive as an archive (Cvetkovich, 2003). Amid this materialist reading, where the books almost take on lives and conversations of their own, and human and non-human relate, I narrate moments of conflict and conviviality between the library's diverse user base, to argue that, despite its imperfections, creating a space upon which even uncomfortable encounters can happen is ultimately of great value. I show how The Hive's capacity to accommodate even fractious encounters between groups and individuals who might not otherwise share non-commercial space builds empathetic and even joyful affects.

In this chapter I have sought to open-up the central concerns from which the rest of the thesis flows, and to lay the path of the lens structure to follow. In the next chapter, I turn more

thoroughly to the situation of the research within existing literature spanning the many strands contained in The Hive.



## Chapter 2: “To classify is human” - Engaging with the literature for The Hive

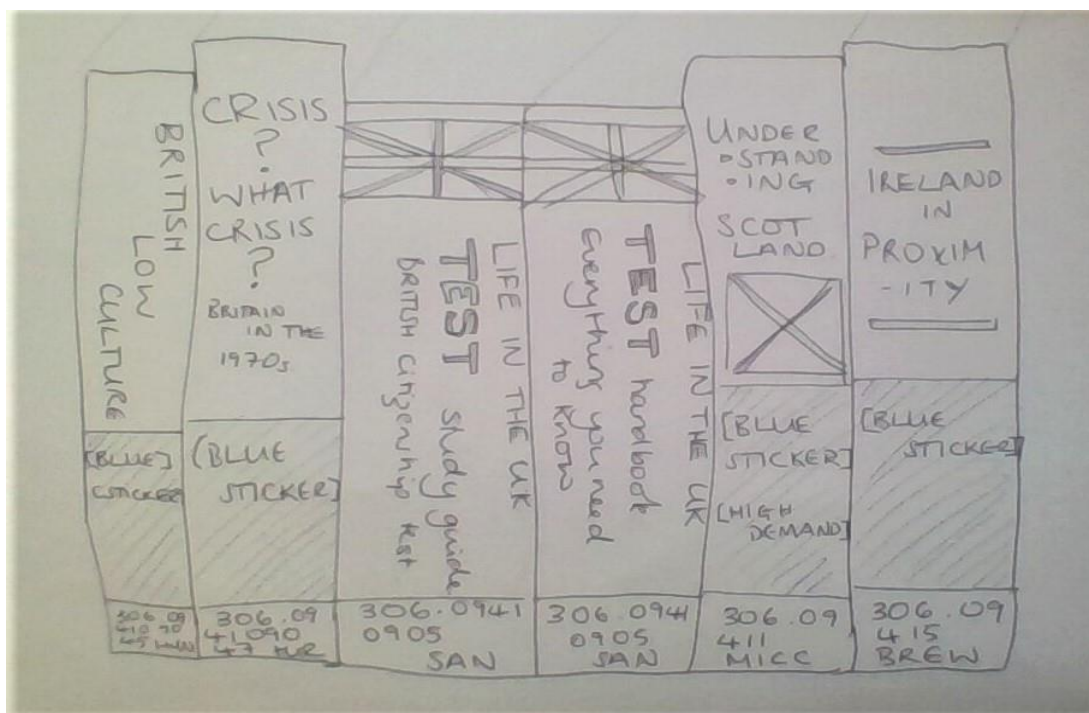


FIGURE 3

### Introduction: getting (un)stuck in a literature review

Approaching this chapter, the ‘Literature Review’, for what feels like the hundredth time, I think about what I am finding challenging about situating this thesis in terms of its academic conversations and research placement. Building on the issues which were opened up in the introductory chapter, the following review aims to extend those conversations my research is having through an exploration of pre-existing work. I state its context within debates around and treatment of libraries in Library and Information Studies (LIS), Higher Education, and work towards arguing for my own contribution of an ethnography which brings affect and classification theories to the empirical site of The Hive. I have returned to The Hive to revise this chapter and consider the journeys I am making around both this library and this thesis. As will become a feature of the thesis to follow, I find myself in the 305<sup>2</sup> area of the main library. I look to the mini library I have now created again on my desk. To my left I see

<sup>2</sup>305 is the Dewey Decimal Class mark for “groups of people”. It is an area of The Hive I return to throughout the fieldwork and repeatedly in this thesis for what it revealed about classifications and boundary crossings at different levels.

and pull down “Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography” by James Clifford at 305.6CLI. I walk to the other side of the library, curiously close to the cookery books, to collect Barnett’s “Imagining the University” at class mark: 378 BAR. Over by the public PCs and the daily newspapers stand is a short stretch of LIS books including “Joint Use Libraries: Greater than the sum of their parts” by Susan McNicol at 021.64 MCN and labelled “High Demand”.

I think about Glaser and Strauss’s evocative comparison between field work and library research: “When someone stands in the library stacks, he (sic) is, metaphorically surrounded by voices begging to be heard (Glaser and Strauss in Star, 1998, p. 218). It strikes me that the issue of the literature review speaks to the issue of The Hive, which in turn speaks to the issues of public space I explore in this thesis: it has to do with the classificatory practices of academic disciplines and their social life. Although certainly not a feature unique to studies of libraries, an issue with *grounding* this research is that one of its central tenets is precisely the slippages and overflows of classifications. These classifications are disciplinary as well as knowledge based, infrastructural as well as personally embodied, professional as well as financial. Walking the floor of The Hive to rediscover related books from unrelated corners of the space brings home the interdisciplinarity of The Hive’s central preoccupations, and the sometimes silliness (Halberstam, 2011, p.20) of any library’s order.

A second challenge is that studies of libraries themselves have many homes in academic research from different disciplines, including their “own” – Library and Information Studies/Science (LIS). Studies of libraries pull together both “The Library” as a universal idea and “the library”, or, just, libraries (Derrida, 2003, p. 12). As I will discuss with material and affective interaction with The Hive in chapter six, the long historical and cultural connotations of “The Library” have implications for the ways different groups engage with specific libraries. “The Library” is invoked as a symbol - for knowledge organisation, for the idea of sanctuary, for the “heart” of a university – as much as it is studied for its own sake. From the perspective of sociology, my interaction with studies of the idea of “the library” is partial: if I were a researcher from Information Science, or even natural sciences, my approach would draw on different studies of libraries. I am implicitly more interested in the library as it operates as a material space, not as a remote or digital entity, and my literature selection reflects this.

### Structure of the chapter

Much like the analysis that follows this chapter, then, delineating and discussing the literature I draw from involves dwelling within sometimes messy and imperfect categories. Since this thesis aims to show how the external shaping of the library and its own material

classifications interplay with the social and internalised classifications of worth and belonging among its publics, I have several potential starting points. What I choose to do with the structure of this chapter – like the thesis as a whole – is funnel-like, beginning broadly with the general themes and questions of libraries and research around them. In the first section I try to set the overall tone of the chapter as having been affected by affect theory and its contributions to thinking through public life and political hope. I then get to the empirical specifics and talk about literatures dealing with the classification and social space inherent to library thinking and highlight LIS as one way in which libraries are researched that is pertinent to this thesis.

The second section of the chapter involves the literature concerning the genesis and location of The Hive. As such, I turn to the context of public higher education and its evolving function within the public of contemporary Britain. This means discussing the scholarship interrogating the “crises” of Higher Education and the function of the university in contemporary Britain. I look at the role and influence of privatisation and New Public Management (NPM) on public life. In the same way as the following chapters of this thesis aim to make clear, these are not easily bounded arenas of public life; they mingle and contradict, ignore and overlap one another.

Narrowing the funnel again, in the third section I return to libraries in light of both their universal complexion (section one) and the specifics of the HE literature (section two) and draw parallels and connections between research developments on HE and research concerning the changing nature of librarianship as a profession interconnectedly affected by professionalisation and NPM. This involves discussion of different approaches to the development of the library profession and the role of the collection.

The final section is therefore the place from which my analytical chapters begin, with the emergence of joint-use libraries, the literatures around them and the questions that are left unanswered. I argue that attention to (ordinary) affect (Stewart, 2007) is an appropriate literature to draw on as a way of studying The Hive differently.

### **Crisis, affect and lateral politics**

Affect and affect theories textured both my fieldwork and the analysis that followed. As I mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, affect is influential – for me – methodologically and politically. Although I seek to describe The Hive at different levels, including institutional (chapter four), the work of writers involved in ‘public feelings projects’ (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 5) have infused even these more formal considerations, with an appeal to look to the surfaces

and textures that these structures enable (Stewart, 2011). By attending to feelings (Cvetkovich, 2003) and their repetitions in space (Wetherell, 2012) the ostensibly rigid structures of institutions like The Hive can be held in a softer focus with a lighter grip.

Overlapping this chapter and the thesis is a recurring idea of crisis. “Crisis” appears as an organising sociological concept in itself, given the ubiquity with which it dominates in so much of the research and political writing around contemporary public life which has informed my research (Rodrigo, 2011). Concerning the interlocking fields which coalesce in this study of The Hive there is ample literature concerning the perceived crises of public libraries (Appleton et al., 2018; Mars and Medak, 2019), Higher Education (Barnett and Griffin, 1997; Barnett, 2012; Watermeyer and Lewis, 2017), financial and public services (Pirie, 2009; Mirowski, 2013; Sealey-Huggins and Pusey, 2013; Walby, 2015), in work and its precariousness (Southwood, 2011), of academic publishing (Pirie, 2009; Harvie et al., 2012, 2013; Mars and Medak, 2019) and of public life itself (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012; Düren, Landøy and Saarti, 2017; Hitchen, 2019).

Crisis as a term should conjure a vision of suddenness and immediacy, totality and all-encompassing nature. But many of the crises mentioned above, and especially in relation to the period of financial austerity in public services which has defined it since 2007, have proved ongoing and tenacious. Crisis, happening “year after year after year” is, for some, “background noise” (Hitchen, 2019, p. 21). I explore literatures of HE and Public Library crises as a structural framing to the thesis, and the methodological chapter that follows this one as well as chapter six dwells on dealing with private feelings in public (Cvetkovich, 2012). Here, I hope to also identify with the affect theory orientated approach to “living austerity” and the domesticity – sometimes banality – of its attendant outcomes of depression (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 156) and enchantment (Bennett, 2001; Pyry, 2017). As I will discuss in this chapter regarding resistance to negative transformations in HE and public services, I see The Hive and this thesis as part of that ordinary and everyday “lateral politics”. Berlant’s “optimism for [the] optimism” of “lateral politics” which she defines through JK Gibson-Graham as in a sense “a commitment to the present activity of the senses” (Berlant, 2011, p. 261) is a guiding principle.

## **What is the library? Classifications, collections, buildings**

Sitting with definitions and understandings of “the library” necessitates discussion of the social life of its functions, classifications, and the roles of those who work in and manage them. Within Library and Information Studies (LIS), this discussion relates to the work done

by librarians. Since their ancient roots in Alexandria (Battles, 2015) writing about libraries and their development has shared the essential understanding of them being managed as spaces (physical or virtual) where objects of knowledge are organised in a systematised infrastructure (Mattern, 2014; Düren, Landøy and Saarti, 2017). The addendum that this organisation of knowledge is designed for access to be given to a “community of users” (Lugya, 2014, p. 141) is understood to have developed in the twentieth century, before which cloistered religious libraries, “chained libraries” and otherwise private libraries were more common (Gray, 2012, p. 39). “Father of library science” Ranganathan’s ‘five laws of library science’ (Ranganathan, 1931; Carr, 2014) are still quoted copiously in LIS courses, reading lists and literatures and they underline the usability function of modern libraries in two places: “books are for use” and “save the time of the reader”.

Within its dedicated field of professional practice and research –LIS – the relative lack of research dealing with the political and ethical dilemmas of library classification is conspicuous (Iverson, 2008; Lewis, 2008; Accardi, Drabinski and Kumbier, 2010; Billey, Drabinski and Roberto, 2014). The nature of classification has the capacity to say something about the cultural values of the host organisation, as well as the capacity to shape how its knowledge is interacted with (Weinberger, 2007). There is a tension between Ranganathan’s idea that the librarian “saves the time of the reader” (Ranganathan, 1931) – so any classification will do if it speeds retrieval? – and the fact that the way things are classified matters. Rather, as Bowker and Leigh Star say (1999, p. 5), “each standard and each category valorises some point of view and silences another”.

The self-defined subfield of Critical Library and Information Studies (CLIS) (Roberto, 2008) has made gradual inroads into the LIS mainstream with Hope Olson (Olson, 2002, 2008) and Sandy Berman (Berman, 1993) beginning in the late 1960s by questioning how subjects are constructed through the library cataloguing process. Since then, they and others have petitioned the Library of Congress – which maintains subject headings and classification schemes – and the American Library Association to remedy racist, homophobic, and otherwise offensive allocations in both the cataloguing (assigning subject headings) and the classification (using those subject headings to assign a library class mark) processes. Chris Bourg has described the practical outcomes of bad classification on the silencing of minority voices through the example of the book “Conduct Unbecoming: Gays & Lesbians in the U.S. Military”. Originally, it was classified in the niche classification section “Minorities, including women, etc. in armed forces” rather than the Military History section, thus making it unlikely

to be stumbled upon on the open library shelves by people who were not specifically looking for it (Morales, Knowles and Bourg, 2014, p. 445).

While these library scholars aim to move and revise oppressive or silencing classifications, more recently Emily Drabinski (2008, p. 94) has argued for “queering the catalogue”. In this approach, she presents an attitude which instead advocates for a supple engagement with classification and its historicity, rather than being engaged with a “politics of correction”. She says:

*Viewing classification and cataloguing from a queer perspective—one that challenges the idea that classification and subject language can ever be corrected once and for all, outside of the context in which those decisions take on meaning—requires new ways of thinking about how to be ethically and politically engaged on behalf of marginal knowledge formations and identities who quite reasonably expect to be able to locate themselves in the library.*

These approaches to classification matter to my engagement with classification and classificatory practices at The Hive insofar as they underline the value laden and generative nature of the library catalogue and the way it constructs space.

### **Classification as materially and socially generative**

The idea of classification in libraries and its effects on both knowledge in-the-making (Lamont and Molnár, 2002; Abbott, 2011) and the sociabilities it allows has been alluded to in philosophy. Writing in 1931, Walter Benjamin’s characterisation of the “mild boredom of order” (Benjamin, 1999, p. 59) in his lively present tense-ed essay “Unpacking my library” speaks both to the overlooked features of library collections, and also the extent to which they communicate an “order” or rationality that has a power beyond the “chaotic” accumulation of individual parts. He asks, “what else is this collection but a disorder to which habit has accommodated itself to such an extent that it can appear as order?” (p.60). He argues that when books are selected and put together they are “individual items within a magic circle” (p.60). Foucault uses and extends this library metaphor in stating that the “fantasia of the library” is its contribution to imagination and creativity found not only in its individual parts, but in the meetings of these parts: “the imaginary is not formed in opposition to reality as its denial or compensation; it grows among signs, from book to book,

in the interstice of repetitions and commentaries; it is born and takes shape in the interval between books” (Foucault, 1977).

More recently and more closely aligned to libraries in themselves rather than as metaphors, Springer (2016) and other contributors in her edited collection “Fantasies of the Library” also explore the unintentionally curatorial aspects of the library and the affects generated by and through its books. She says:

*If the book is traditionally seen as the preferred medium for private consumption and research, and the gallery is understood as the space for public exhibition and performance, the library – as the public place of reading – is thus a hybrid site for performing the book (Springer and Turpin, 2016, p. 7).*

Though coming from three different eras and none within LIS, Benjamin, Foucault, and Springer’s lyrical appreciation of the singularity of libraries as generative spaces inform my analysis at the Hive. Their balancing of chaos and accidental order is a useful further determination to LIS and serves as a metaphor for The Hive: like their collections, their publics, their budgets, the collecting of individual items communicates an “order”, whether it has been curated or not.

### Libraries as social spaces

This section turns to the library as a learning place (Ellsworth, 2005) and a social space and considers the different treatment and historical trajectories of public and academic libraries. As Black and Hoare have said, public library history and research within LIS is richer in theoretical framings than academic libraries (2006, p5). This discrepancy seems related to the fact that public libraries have maintained societal concerns beyond instrumental service provision in a way that academic libraries have not, despite – and perhaps because of - having vastly different funding and professional identities (Black, 2003, 2013; Bateman and Vincent, 2010; Hoare, 2013; Robinson, 2014). The scarcity of research equivalent to those in public librarianship concerning topics like LGBT+ issues, colonialism, class, and so on in UK academic libraries (Whitmire, 2004 and Hudson, 2017 are useful US examples of exceptions) is suggestive of an impression that academic library users are there one-dimensionally. In this mode, Academic Libraries serve fully formed students with only education as a goal – rather than as a community with the same complexities and inter subjectivities that the public outside of the university has. My work at The Hive shows this is clearly not the case.



Historically, libraries have often been the most physically impressive building on campus and come packed with clichés alluding to their being “the powerhouse” (Hoare, 2013, p319), “laboratory” (Abbott, 2011, p43) and “refuge” of the university (Back, 2016, p195). At the foundation of Britain’s ancient universities and many that followed, designs seemed like elaborate shrines to knowledge, with visible collections facilitating browsing and classical artwork commonly found (Campbell and Pryce, 2013). The positivistic attitude that all human knowledge could be gathered and organised in the library and could therefore be used to explain humanity’s onward trajectory can be seen in the racialised busts of “man” that still sit in the Library of Congress (Collins, 2009). Expectations of space are dictated by design, and the sometimes intricate and overwhelmingly individual study spaces of the older universities’ libraries reflect the way ‘library research’ was conceived of as solitary and silent. Although visible collections have declined in recent years in favour of increased study space (Wilders, 2017) it is interesting to note that some of the leading edge ‘bookless libraries’ such as the Saltire Centre at Glasgow Caledonian University have recently reinstated, because of demand, more traditional features like individual quiet study booths (Watson and Howden, 2013, p. 15) librarian enquiry desks and book shelves. Even as the expansion of HE in the 1960s and again in the 1990s necessitated fresh approaches to library staffing and the use of more flexible and inexpensive materials (Richnell, 1966), the idea of the library as a destination and an architectural statement has persisted (Robinson, 2014).

Today, funding into the architecture of, often brand new, university libraries has remained surprisingly high in light of HE’s financial constraints. New builds, such as those at University of Birmingham (opened 2016) and University of Sheffield (2015) both reflect fresh concerns with group learning, glass and transparency, and technology (Robinson, 2014, p. 33). There are perhaps two main motivations for these developments. One line is perhaps cynical, whereby “flashy” features in new libraries are a cheap win for universities looking for a market advantage on competitors. Library scholar-practitioner Donna Lanclos has pointed to vanity features in new build libraries in a witty blogpost called “Atriums: We need to talk” (Lanclos, 2015). Here, she describes atriums - these near-ubiquitous noisy open space stairwells – which The Hive has – as in opposition to the interests of those using the buildings: “a middle finger of architectural detail, in a context where university students and staff don’t have enough places to go and do what they need for their work, their degrees, their scholarship” (np).

However, the second pertinent strand in new university library development is a longer process in the UK and concerns changing ways of learning. Many of the newer library



buildings come as a result of evolving attitudes around pedagogy and scholarship. The Learning and Teaching Grids at the University of Warwick and the Information Commons at the University of Sheffield are two key examples of how libraries as spaces of individualised study have changed to become embedded teaching and learning spaces. At Warwick, the Learning and Teaching Grids encourage students to adapt and take ownership over space, without library staff (Appleton, Stevenson and Boden, 2011, p. 353). The ideas of flexible learning spaces and student autonomy over spaces that are key features of these large projects have been replicated on smaller “hub” scales at many other university libraries (Hurst, 2013, p. 401).

So far in this chapter I have introduced the matrix of research and interests that concern this thesis and have focused on change and continuity within the role and function of the library, highlighting attitudes towards classification and the building as a social space. This ends with the idea that this thesis picks up on in the analytical chapters that follow: that libraries have the essential feature of being spaces of often underappreciated classification, that this classification encourages the production of sociabilities and that the buildings themselves communicate and inculcate values. The following section builds on this by focusing on the research around Higher Education and how this relates to the academic library.

## **Higher Education and its crises**

Having introduced the research with reference to three broad categories of literature around libraries: defining the library as a classificatory space, a social space and a space designed for knowledge curation, the following section turns to the broader positioning of this thesis within studies of Higher Education in the UK. While the previous section considered the universal elements of libraries, what follows begins to make the point that the constituent bodies that “parent” the library are key to how space and its possibilities are (re)created. Following this literature is important for me because it helps situate The Hive as one possible response to the “crises” of HE and public librarianship, while also opening up some of the challenges raised by such an accommodating integrated library.

Ronald Barnett claimed in 1997 that “Higher Education is in crisis” (p. 1). This and many other contributions to critical studies in HE in the 1990s (Scott, 1995) went on to position this crisis as coming from one of two main angles: one focused on neoliberalism, the marketisation of higher education and loss of academic autonomy coming from outside the academy (Brown and Scase, 1994; Shore and Wright, 1999). The other was concerned with the “loss of faith in the Enlightenment project” (Elliot et al., 1996, p. xv) within the universities themselves. This

second crisis was said to have been threatened from within the academy by the destabilising epistemology of postmodernism, and the calling into question of the previously assumed relationships between knowledge and truth. Though postmodernism might not be the term used today, the two sides of the debate on Higher Education within the public sphere seem to have changed little since the 90s except in their intensity. Criticisms of the entrepreneurial, neoliberal, corporate university abound within one argument (Collini, 2012; Giroux, 2014; Watts, 2017) while the so-called 'infantilisation' (Furedi, 2016) of HE caused by a rejection of scientific 'neutrality' characterises the other. Suggestions on how to inculcate critical thought and academic freedom are largely felt to be within the hands of academic staff, rather than either student movements or support services, like the library (Neary, 2013; Neary and Winn, 2016).

Although these two strands are often considered separately, if concurrently, there are substantial points of dialogue between them that centre upon the role and function of the university in society as it is enmeshed between the state, markets and publics (Elliot et al, 1996; Neary, 2013; Neary & Winn, 2012). Both strands also have significant ramifications for the library. On the one side, the individualisation of HE and its movement from a public to a private good affects the library's purpose, governance, and possibilities both as a public building and as a "service" to user-groups reconceived as customers. On the other, the crisis of academic knowledge calls in to question how knowledge is chosen, given status and valued in libraries. In effect, this second crisis could cleave open space for a radical intervention into the uneven distribution of authority in academia - a kind of 'why is my library white?', in relationship with the "why is my curriculum white" movement for decolonising the university that sprang up in student activism in 2014. In the following section I will outline the discussion of the two strands of crisis in HE before focusing on how they have reformulated the position and function of the library in the university.

### The neoliberal university

The wider economic and political context to HE changes also reflects the absorption of NPM and the supposed efficiencies of markets. The insertion of government-created market orientation into HE and contingent processes of audit and evaluation has created a hyper-competitive environment that feels toxic to many working and learning within it, particularly those whose lives are made less comfortable by their gender, age, ethnicity, and background (Gill, 2009; Brook and Michell, 2012; Pereira, 2015; Morrish and Sauntson, 2016). Since the Browne review of 2010, and more recently the safe passage of the Higher Education and

Research Bill (2017)<sup>3</sup>, writers from across the disciplines have decried the erosion of “community” and public orientation within the academy, as well as the little contested movement from understanding Higher Education as a social right to understanding it as an individual privilege (Hazelkorn and Gibson, 2017). As Holmwood has recently argued, “private interests aggregated through the market have become the very definition of the public interest” (Holmwood 2017). Beyond straightforward finances – which of course include the trebling of individualised student debt - these decisions are politically motivated and have political outcomes: the content of research under these conditions themselves is threatened and altered at all stages of the university process. Marketable knowledge must be quantified on impact measured with the keys held by costly publication and funding monopolies (de Angelis and Harvie, 2009; Pirie, 2009; Mars and Medak, 2019).

The status of teaching is also altered in these conditions and makes education more of a customer service than a relationship. While the new paradigm of “student centred” teaching and learning is accepted by many, not least within LIS research (Watson, 2008), it has been argued to amount to a narrowing of experience for those engaged in education (Cruickshank, 2016; Collini, 2017). Putting “students at the heart of the system”, as the Conservative-Liberal Democrat white paper on Higher Education (2011) promised to do, is only a true statement in so far as students now represent the main income stream of universities. Watts argues that the “discourse and practice of ‘student-centred learning’ is actually negated by many practices found in the modern university” (Watts, 2017, p. 229). It also amounts to a philosophical shift in line with the “customer centred” transformation trend elsewhere in NPM.

### **New Public Management**

NPM literature frames changes both within the HE and the Public Sector. As a political shift that affected many public services after Thatcher, the rise of NPM in the 80s and 90s (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Deem, Hillyard and Reed, 2007) is variously understood and writers such as Dent, Chandler and Barry (Dent, Chandler and Barry, 2004) warn that its title should not be understood to represent “one unified set of practices but a theme which has distinct variation within the different sectors” (p. 1). Its features nevertheless coalesce around a belief in the effectiveness of market creation for the running of increasingly disaggregated services (Dent, Chandler and Barry, 2004) by responsible and self-regulated “appropriate

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<sup>3</sup>The overriding result of the Act is to make it easier for private, for-profit providers of HE to obtain degree awarding status (Choat, 2017, p. 140).

selves”, or professionals (Fournier, 1999, p. 284). In the HE environment, this has had the effect of creating managerialised services which operate as professions where they would not have before, as in administration, human resources, and sales (Fournier, p. 280), and, as I will discuss in chapter five, professional services like librarianship.

NPM has been absorbed within both HE libraries and public libraries and fundamentally affects the styles of engagement in the institutions. Two of the key features of NPM that relate most to The Hive are around the development of consumerist mentalities in public service relationships, and the loss of professional autonomy in favour of generalised managerialism (Hazelkorn and Gibson, 2017). Regarding the first, Watts argues that “new public management treats citizenship as a form of consumerism and requires that public services like health or education now be redefined and treated as consumer goods (Watts, 2017, p. 112). As such, in institutions like universities, the extent to which students can realise the community and citizenship ends of Higher Education - to “discover and extend their idea of themselves and how they might realise themselves” (Holmwood, 2011, p. 7) - is substantially reduced if they are invoked as customers legitimising competitive reforms.

The second key strand of NPM – that of a culture of managerialism - which inculcates a kind of service professionalism is a key feature of this thesis. In this strand it is argued that the description of ‘the professional’ is no longer tied to a bounded community of knowledge, but to a modality of appropriate behaviours (Fournier, 1999). Dardot and Laval (p. 250) describe the interconnectedness of management, measurement, and professional discipline powerfully: “Management is based on an illusion of quantitative mastery of the effects of action”. A further feature of managerialism is the extent to which it is dispersed as a form of (self)discipline across workers rather than in a traditional top-down way. As Pettinger (2019, p. 72) says, this might be presented as autonomy, but is really predicated on conformity: ‘Employees are told that they are empowered, but only insofar as they are made responsible for conforming to set standards and hierarchies.’

The extent to which NPM has affected public libraries in this way is evident not only in literature which is explicitly concerned with NPM – such as Düren et al (Düren, Landøy and Saarti, 2017) – but especially that which is not. Strands of NPM can be seen in the proliferation of LIS literature which calls library users “customers” despite there being no monetary transaction inherent to the relationship between institution and user group. In a manner that almost felt surreal, Evjen and Audunson (2009, p. 171) mention NPM benignly in their article while questioning whether “the public’s attitudes represent a barrier to

institutional change in public libraries". Here, the citizen-as-customer paradigm almost seems to evolve into a customer-as-barrier one. The following section charts these processes and the processes around it in librarianship and LIS in more detail.

### Professionalisation in librarianship

Professionalisation in Librarianship is understood as having had two phases, and both play out in the life of The Hive. The first came in the post second world war period as academia grew, academic disciplines became more stable and discreet (Abbott, 2011, p. 44), and research practices began to privilege long citation lists signalling membership to "academic subcommunities" (p. 81). Librarians were positioned as authorities on knowledge curation, having discipline-specific expertise, and disinterested status within the university (Richnell, 1966, p. 293). This status came in a pre-internet period when many of the 'traditional' tasks of librarianship such as cataloguing, bibliography, and searching across indexes and card catalogues concentrated expertise away from most researchers, creating a division which sociologist Andrew Abbott claims was an attempt by librarians to "demote" faculty because of librarians' preference for "centralisation and administrative control over acquisitions" (p. 58). This first style of professionalisation could be seen as professionalisation in the more traditional sense, as a membership of a community of knowledge and work. At The Hive and in the LIS literature, this is interacted with and transformed by processes of professionalisation in the NPM sense.

The second phase of professionalisation is bemoaned in Juris Dilevko's book "The politics of professionalism: a retro-progressive proposal for librarianship" (2009) and is more closely aligned with NPM from the 1980s. Dilevko uses the category of class to describe the current situation sensitively and associates professionalism in librarianship with a desire to promote "individualism and individual solutions as a way of transcending class" (p. 85). His proposed solution is to withdraw librarianship qualifications which, traditionally, granted access to particular library jobs (though, as I discuss in detail in chapter five this is increasingly not the case). If LIS departments stopped offering graduate degrees, he writes, "aspiring librarians would no longer be required to earn a university level professional degree. Concomitantly, they would no longer be obsessed with being thought of as professionals, nor with enhancing their professional standing" (Dilevko, 2009). I find this an intentionally polemic but nevertheless short-sighted assessment of the ways professionalisation has changed with NPM. The issue of professionalisation in the library field coincides with new managerialism in such a way that the specific skills of the librarian (from phase one of professionalisation)

are lost at same time that – in Sandy Iverson’s phrase - a different “scramble for professional status” (Iverson, 2008) begins.

However, Rory Litwin’s 2009 paper on the subject argues usefully that merely stripping professional librarians of that professional status - articulating an equality between all library workers (as the American Library Association approved in 2005 p. 43) regardless of whether they have a qualification or not – will not ultimately undermine the managerialist mode of professionalisation. In fact, he sees this kind of well-intentioned move by “activist” library workers as a gift to managerialism: “by calling all staff members “professionals”, [managers] blur the distinction between librarians and non-librarians and shift attention away from the autonomy that, to a significant extent, belongs to librarians as professionals” (p. 44). Beilin (2016, p. 15) also notes that because libraries struggle for an autonomy from the “managerial class”, the power of administrators, who have themselves been professionalised, dwarfs the professional and context specific expertise of qualified library staff. As such, while professionalisation is generally not seen in CLIS as valuable, in the wider context of institutional pressures, it can be a protective shield and is not straightforwardly negative. As I discuss in chapter five, the anxiety of “qualified librarians” at The Hive feels at times pronounced, and their relationships within both the wider university environment – particularly academic faculty – and within the environment of The Hive reveals how much boundary work is necessary to try to maintain professional status. Having summarised the dual strands of “crisis” in HE and how they impacted librarianship, the next section turns to crisis responses.

## **Crises responses**

The reaction to these transformative practices in HE has been as multifaceted as its criticism, and relate not only to the specific aspects that authors find objectionable about the so-called “neoliberal university”, but also their own political persuasions on what public HE ought to look like, and how it might come about. A consistent voice across the decades in critical studies in HE, Barnett has argued for a combative insistence on ‘imagination’ within academic led thinking about the university, and contends that the current dominant stream of anti-neoliberal thinking has become “hopelessly impoverished” (Barnett, 2013). Because it focuses on the criticism of neoliberalism which employs “an unremittingly bleak vocabulary” (p. 3), Barnett argues that, rather than propagating hopeful alternative visions of “human wellbeing” (p. 23) critics reinforce the narrowed vision of HE which the policies and ideologies they criticise set in chain.

Though useful, it is also hard not to think that Barnett's comfortable position as Professor Emeritus might have something to do with his personal capacity to create the space required for the imagination, and his tacit preference for a bygone era fails to consider the racialized, sexist and elitist foundations of the university itself. Many of the so-called "bleak" commentaries are those which expose the lie of the "Enlightenment project" as well as bemoaning the corporatisation of the university, coming from a place previously denied by the university (Ahmed, 2012; Emejulu, 2017). In so doing, these writers draw the two forms of 'crisis' together - of the university in public, and the knowledge in the university - and disrupt the idea of the golden age of universities while also rejecting neoliberalism. Academics working within discussions of class (Brook and Michell, 2012), feminism, disability, and race (Emejulu, 2017) have thus highlighted the co-incidence of the elitist foundations of universities alongside its more recent marketisation. Questioning the 'golden age' of universities in this way opens pertinent questions for what the reconstruction of a truly public university would look like and entail.

As such, this strand of the so-called 'crisis of knowledge' in the academy might be described as a challenge to traditional academic knowledge that goes both beyond the neoliberal argument and the epistemological rupture caused by postmodernism, and as such offers a critique that is much deeper than either alone. This can be conceived of positively, especially in relation to libraries and movements for radical education beyond universities. Market orientation has done nothing to ameliorate the elitist and even racist foundations of university research and teachings. But neither necessarily did the advent of mass education in either the 60s or 90s (Emejulu, 2017; Holmwood, 2011, p. 19). Stuart Hall stated in 1990 that he never intended to "darken [the] doorways" of the university again once he had found the "open world", and described his return to academia at Birmingham tellingly as a "retreat", indicating the long-felt isolation and limitations of HE to deal with real issues (Giroux and McClaren, 1994, p. 2)

### **The Hive and this thesis as response**

Contributing to this strand of resistance and perhaps in indirect answer to Barnett's call for imagination and "critical being" as well as "critical thinking", the notions of the Public University (Holmwood ed, 2011), the "University as Fool" (Kavanagh, 2009) the "Civic University" (Goddard et al., 2016) and others have emerged. I argue that as a form of indirect or lateral politics (Berlant, 2011), The Hive and my research into it ought to be considered a further form of creative resistance. Though not explicitly positioning themselves as radical,

joint-use libraries like The Hive unsettle both the knowledge-based and market-based strands of the HE and public education crises. Firstly, The Hive offers something “disruptive” within the status quo of HE in the UK, through opening its doors to those who have not paid the tuition fee. In so doing, they force a proximity between narratives of “public” and “private” as well as “public” and “academic” which must be negotiated, in the present and within its walls, as well as at policy level. Secondly, despite the fact that The Hive is not self-consciously “radical”, it is disruptive of the conservative and even reactionary elements of library classifications and elite interpretations of knowledge because of the fact it interfiles material aimed at different readers for different purposes together. As I discuss in detail in chapter six, this has the effect of creating a sort of “silly archive” (Halberstam, 2011) which levels high and low theory - Masculinity studies with Top Gear manuals - and provokes unintended questioning along the way.

#### Joint-use libraries literature: compatible publics?

The final section of the chapter points to the existing literature on joint-use libraries. Recent research identifies joint-use libraries as one response to the issues facing higher education and public libraries. Much of the growing recent literature on ‘joint-use’ and ‘co-located and shared services’ libraries points to their increasing numbers worldwide (McNicol, 2008; Gunnels, Green and Butler, 2012). Within the literature centred either in North America or Britain the reasons for the founding of joint-use libraries are usually economic expediency and pragmatism, rather than reasons of educational philosophy (Dalton et al, 2006; McNicol, 2006, Gunnels et al 2012). Dill’s (2011) chapter on joint-use libraries is in a US-centred volume called “The Frugal Librarian: thriving in tough economic times”, and Massis makes the point that at a time when so-called “customer responsiveness” is essential, having an academic library open to the public will demonstrate the wider institution’s essentialness to “boards, funders, legislators, students, parents and the public itself” (2017, p. 106). The first of a seventeen-point list of “advantages” of joint use libraries by Bundy and Amey is that they “represent efficient use of public money”. That the perceived societal benefits are last on the list and are described still in economic terms - “[joint-use libraries] enhance social capital through increased community engagements” - is indicative of the importance placed on finances (Bundy and Amey, 2006, p. 503). Likewise, McNicol (2008), Dalton, et al (2006) all place notions of joint funding, economies of scale, and “increased market power” high on their explanations, though McNicol makes clear through examples of costly projects in the US that costs are often higher than anticipated (p. 24).



Beyond economic imperatives, the possibilities of community engagement, education, and collaboration are stated as key reasons for joint-use libraries. However, this research is rarely situated within any analysis of the relationships between concepts of public and private, state and markets. Within this geographic area (US and UK) of joint-use libraries, however, it is telling that the bulk of projects have taken place at a time where social welfare has been systematically devalued by successive governments. Projects between university and public libraries have most frequently occurred either in rural (McNicol, 2006) or in lower socio-economic areas, and with universities less likely to be elite and likely to draw predominantly from the local community (Dalton et al, 2006). For example, the Martin Luther King Joint Library in San José (US) has a taskforce dedicated to serving the considerable homeless population in the Santa Clara region (Molteni, Goldman and Oulc'hen, 2017).

Studies on joint-use libraries primarily draw from management and business studies beyond other LIS research. This is symptomatic both of the common understanding of joint-use libraries as a financially rather than educationally orientated developments, and also of LIS being dominated by business and management epistemologies (Radford and Radford, 2005). Bundy and Amey (2006) cite only eight sources beyond their own work, and all but one (which is a book on management) are LIS texts. Further suggesting absorption of NPM is their use of corporate evaluative tools like "Balanced Scorecard" and "Critical Success Factors Method" (pp. 506-509), thus defining joint-use libraries only in descriptive rather than conceptual terms. A cause of this overemphasis on managerial concepts and financial gain is a lack of rooted commitment to the project of shared and collaborative library research, and of a sense that joint-use library projects are not in the hands of those working on the ground. Defining success through shallow audit measures like Balanced Scorecard and KPIs limits more complex conversations about success and what it might look like in libraries. A lack of agency among staff is illustrated by one joint-use library directors' admission that the library they run in Indianapolis was founded on the decision of "the powers that be" (Hommey, 2015, p. 409).

Showing that these outcomes are affected by the broader political environment and in contrast to the UK and North American trends, the other main centre for the growth of joint-use libraries is in Northern Europe, with studies coming from Sweden, Norway, and Finland. Here, commitment to the social democratic values of education and community welfare has been historically more enduring (Hansson, 2006; Evjen and Audunson, 2009). The literature on joint-use libraries reflects this. Though not a blanket judgment, the research from these areas feeds into a much more culturally sensitive and complex picture of the environment

and position of libraries in society (Gomez, Hulten and Drehmer, 1998; Sundin and Johannisson, 2004; Hansson, 2010), so much so that the trend for joint use libraries there becomes almost incomparable with the studies in the UK and US.

The treatment of the publics of academia and the general public highlight a fundamental difference in the status of civil society. Several US and UK studies highlight the difficulty of merging services because of the culturally distinct nature of academic and public librarianship, but phrase this either as something unknowable and vague - "clearly there can be differences in culture and practices between staff from different backgrounds which can affect integration" (Dalton, Elkin and Hannaford, 2006, p. 543) or as something attributable to personal pettiness and an obstacle rather than an intrinsic mismatch - "these streamlined organisations...often suffer from staffing conflicts and territorial disputes" (Hommey, 2015, p. 405).

In contrast, Hansson (2006) argues that the fusion of academic and public libraries can be fundamentally problematic because they are agencies of different institutions, and these two institutions are framed radically differently to their counterparts. In Sweden, Hansson describes public libraries as being "considerably more complex" than academic ones, with political, cultural and humanistic anchorings that academic libraries do not have. In contrast, he claims academic libraries to have an "instrumental purpose in supporting the process of scientific work and development" (p. 558). Further, he states that the greatest resistance to joint use libraries in Sweden has come from within the public library sector, where users organised against integration because they saw "the public library as a counterpoint to formal education, a space where free *bildung*<sup>4</sup> could be obtained" (p. 555). While much of the point of the new libraries in Sweden was to break down barriers between formal and informal education, it is fascinating that the resistance came from a strong and committed public who felt their rights to be outside of institutionalised education were being threatened.

These sentiments are different to those expressed in literature in the UK and the US. Here, it is often public librarianship that is tacitly perceived as the partner in need, and the identity of public library staff and patrons feels negatively juxtaposed with the university partner. This is reflected not only in a downgrading of what the public are seen to want to do in libraries, but also in how the staff are organised in the respective sectors. Dalton, Elkin, and Hannaford acknowledge the different pay-scales, career progression, and status between public and

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<sup>4</sup>Bildung refers to the German tradition of self-cultivation

academic librarianship in an article about The Hive (2006, p. 542), without interrogating how that paradigm has come about, what its legitimacy is, and how this might lead to an understandable sense in which the public library staff, and the public library patrons, will come to feel resentful. Dalton et al tacitly undermine public librarians by suggesting that they can answer students' queries with "little difficulty" (p. 543), as though this is against apparently well-known opinion. Conaway (2000) similarly highlights instances where academic and public staff have clashed in other joint-use projects due to academic staff asking for their own enquiry desk, away from the public's concerns (p. 42). The questions of what it means in practice and in relation to education that public libraries have lost their identity as the "people's university" (Hoare, 2013) in Britain, are seldom asked. Academic library research in the UK that deals with public access to university libraries is often concerned with meeting the university's public engagement (PE) targets. These tend to amount to preplanned school visits with specific goals rather than disinterested public access. Watermeyer and Lewis (2017) criticise such institutionalisation of public engagement, saying that they stop being a "catalyst for positive social change" and are "recast as an instrument for occupational conformity" (p. 2). As such, there is a space in the literature for thinking about how explicitly joint-use projects leapfrog the narrow aims of PE and produce unexpected outcomes of genuine critical engagement that is beneficial to all.

Reflecting on this literature, it has felt useful for me to think of LIS at times as more of a discourse than a field of engagement for this thesis, and as such to ask questions of what the limited existing research on joint-use libraries reveals both about the ways they are conceived by library practitioners and about the nature of LIS research itself. Joint-use libraries between university and public libraries pose questions about the nature of academic knowledge and the status of academia in communities, and bring into relief the questions of exclusivity, security, and public rights, that surround the gated and enclosed nature of most academic libraries. However, from engaging with LIS research around this, it is clear to me how uncommon in library research it is to focus on the social contexts that each tradition – public, informal education and social space, and university Higher Education – bring to joint-use projects. Consequently, the capacity of this research to tell us something about public life more generally is limited.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I return to the central struggle of this chapter and of this thesis: situating The Hive within a wider matrix of social concerns. Just as The Hive is a site through which a diverse

range of features of public life ebb and flow around classifications, so too is the literature it touches. I have orientated my research as being in conversation with diverse literatures concerned with the idea of “the library” as a classificatory, social, and contingent space. Secondly, I spoke to the dual elements of “crisis” that permeate sociology of HE literature – that of marketisation on the one hand and destabilised knowledge claims on the other – and argued that the library, and The Hive (and my research into it specifically) offers a site of productive resistance to the negative impacts of both strands. Finally, I discussed the range of existing approaches to joint-library research and suggested that my affect orientated ethnographic approach is a useful contribution to what is currently a predominantly business and management focussed field.

A central feature of the chapter has been to explicate some of these areas and concerns, with the view to arguing that my thesis sits in conversation both with issues and with approaches. As such, this chapter has sought not only to contextualise my research within the existing literature it speaks to, but also to contribute the argument that research into public institutions should be considered as interconnected and contingent. The chapters that follow draw from material shelved throughout the library, mirroring the interdependent and connected processes that (re)create our institutions of public life.

As such, I choose to bring an ethnographic sensibility with a lateral political viewpoint to an empirical site. The next chapter turns to the methods with which I do this.

## Chapter 3: “The body in the library”- capturing The Hive through dwelling, doodling and describing

*Back to where I started – in the 305s ...it feels fitting to sit here again after a few weeks – months probably honestly – of being at sea with my PhD. I know I’ve done interviews during that time, but returning to this desk makes me realise I’ve felt a bit detached from the rhythms of The Hive in that time...I notice the collections on the wall of shelving opposite me have moved along about three shelves to the right from before...the movement of the shelves means that “Ethnography” books are staring down directly opposite me. I feel trolled – like they have been put there to prod me - and get a few down: Pool and Morrison’s *Ethnography for Education* (305.80072/Pol), Sarah Pink’s *Doing Visual Ethnography* (305.80072/PIN). Both marked High Demand.*

*(Research Diary extract).*

### Introduction: finding myself in the library

Doing ethnography in a library had the mixed virtue of being a space ideally suited for the writing of a PhD, while also giving next to no opportunity for distinguishing fieldwork from desk work. On the one hand, being “covert” was easy; I often needed to work and enjoyed using The Hive in its own right. Doing research in a library afforded an opportunity that is probably unique in ethnographies: participative research was also just the writing of a PhD. And on the other hand, and as the fieldnote above suggests, I was never far away from the questions of writing up and research when I was just sat in the library taking it in. This could get overwhelming: books seemed to laughingly tell me from their spaces on the shelves above me: “you’re not reading enough”. Similarly, unexpected encounters with library users and spontaneous conversations that interrupted me as I wrote often made me want to rewrite and re-configure exactly what I was trying to say.

Sitting in a library was also destabilising as I wrestled with my motives for being there. As I began my fieldwork, I frequently came up against the urge to promote or condemn the joint-use model of The Hive. Though I had chosen the methodology of ethnography and knew that my aim was neither an attempt of rational evaluation nor of true representation, my

advocacy for libraries felt fierce and emotional: I wanted to say projects like The Hive will save the idea of the library; The Hive is good, The Hive is bad. Part of the comfort of falling into simplistic evaluation comes with living in a society of five-star ratings (Causey, 2017, p. 20). But more importantly there is the fact that staying in the mess while still wanting to treat truth seriously is hard. As Lambert (2018) describes, working with “the world’s infinite complexity...calls on our powers of (sociological) imagination and our political wills to keep moving towards the brink rather than retreating to the clearer ground of (alleged) empirical assurance” (p. 191).

But there were more possible drivers for wanting to figure out The Hive in a simplistic manner too. I had left a librarian job to begin my PhD and have cared deeply about libraries professionally and personally for a long time. I was used to the subject of both libraries and librarianship being curiously denigrated by those outside of its world (sometimes even by those in it). It was not nothing to be studying something that frequently prompted amused responses, ranging from a kind of patronising intrigue (“an ethnography of a library? I didn’t know you could study that...so lovely!!!”) to ridicule (“A library? They still exist? Who even uses those?!”). It was often impossible to resist feeling defensive, wanting to spell out some of the lesser known facts relating to public libraries: that their provision by local authorities is a statutory requirement (Goulding, 2013), that not everyone uses the internet now - 10% of people in the UK have never used it (Serafino, 2019, p. 2), that despite the fact that around 500 public libraries have closed in less than a decade, they are still well used and might be used much more if they were properly funded. There is also a class, racial, and gender dimension to public library usage: compared with 32% of white adults over 16, 43% of black adults have used one in the past year (GOV.UK, 2019). Women are more likely to be library users than men (Applegate, 2008).

And yes, you can indeed study librarianship (I’d already grown used to that incredulous reaction to my master’s degree). Reading Robinson’s discussion of being asked if her own PhD on libraries was a post-mortem (Robinson, 2014, p. 2) prompted great recognition. Further, as I suggested in the opening of the literature review, my perception from some of my engagement with Sociology was that libraries are notably absent from dominant conversations about developments in HE, and knowledge organisation generally. As such, several factors meant I had to consciously return to my aim of ethnographic exploration of The Hive as a living project throughout the ethnographic process. Intentionally relating to my personal relationship with libraries alongside a research aim which was about affective

relations in a straightened public context encouraged me to be inventive in the ways I sought to understand the project and the lives I describe within it.

### Chapter structure

The first section of this chapter will describe my general theoretical perspective with relation to my research questions. I will then discuss my employment of multiple slow methods as a response to these questions, and I will explicate this in reference to the three “D”s of my time at The Hive: firstly, slowness in a temporal and dispositional sense (dwelling) (Ingold, 2011); secondly in terms of doodling as a kind of deliberative and contemplative seeing (Edwards, 1986); and finally, bringing these together through description (Gibson-Graham, 2006). The third section will take the perspective of an ethnographic vignette, which leads into a further discussion of my positionality as a ‘shy’ researcher and the ways in which this disposition shaped my research. Finally, I will explicate the practicalities of my study, including describing ethical considerations and questions of anonymity.

My research questions and ethnographic approach attempt to find a middle ground between an overly dispassionate and infrastructural research approach, and a structureless reading. I examine The Hive considering its daily life, the way its communities extend, push back, or redefine concepts like integration, empathy, and publicness. I am, through ethnography, describing an institution, making a story out of it, which, while brought together by multiple strands of data collection, is still somewhat a story which only I will tell (Lyon, 2012, p. 165). As such, I am clearly not only interested in whether The Hive’s balance sheet and circulation statistics present it as a viable response to the public and academic crises described in the literature review. At the same time, I aim to do those things while also accepting the overarching themes and contexts of living in a time where public goods are being reconceived as private ones (Holmwood and Bhambra, 2012). As such, though not *determining* behaviours per se, I still believe there exists “society, where political identities are articulated and power relations challenged (Leggett, 2013, p. 300).

In addition to introducing the fieldwork and its development alongside research aims and questions, this methodology chapter is punctuated by interaction with vignettes and reflections based on and in the year I spent at The Hive. Drawing on moments that shaped my research which occurred well into the experience of research might appear as an admission that I went into the fieldwork underprepared, and in a way, it is. However, in the sense that I sought to understand The Hive through inhabiting and dwelling in the space and being accepting of its contradictions and complexities, being flexible was a value. Indeed,

accessing and assessing my own position in the researching and allowing myself to adapt to both the dramaturgical (Scott et al., 2012) and emotional complexion of ethnography and sociology (Back, 2009) was insightful. It was heartening and validating to read Taussig's explanation that while it is obviously possible to "work with a strict plan of investigation", doing so would "eliminate chance", referencing Walter Benjamin's belief that the best way to get to know a city is to get lost in it (Taussig, 2011, p. 48).

These methodological encounters during my fieldwork relate to my developing a groundedness with several inescapable and initially uncomfortable features of my research: firstly, the messy, live nature of The Hive and my desire to understand the limits and possibilities of integrated knowledge, education and space in the context of public and academic library crises. It became clear early on in my fieldwork that The Hive is more than one thing – a library, a space, a project of public-private partnerships - and that it has been in a process of change ever since its opening (a process which may well be perpetual). Although this "more than one thing" idea is a truism of any social phenomena, the layers of visibility, invisibility, shifting ambivalences and structural obscurities became a defining feature of The Hive, rather than a side-product of the ethnographic process. Accepting this and choosing inventive methods to work through it was the first turning point I will refer to through engagement with doodling as a method and as an analytical tool.

The second uncomfortable feature of the fieldwork process which led to a turning point in terms of engagement with my aim to understand The Hive was engaging with myself as, if not quite a "reluctant researcher" (Scott et al., 2012), then at least a bit of a shy one. Through engaging with both shyness and messiness with the activities of doodling and dwelling, I argue that emotionality is crucial to understanding and communicating the life of The Hive. This is not only a recognition of reflexivity on my own part, but also an engagement with the realities of negotiating encounters in public spaces today. In a sense, the shyness was not, and is not, always mine, but is increasingly a recognisable feature of public life. As Erving Goffman argued, "embarrassment, especially the mild kind, clearly shows itself to be located not in the individual but in a social system wherein he has several selves" (Goffman, 1967, p. 108).

Altogether, I follow and want to extend Les Back's call to engage in "a sensuous mode of scholarship in which the social relations of sound, smell, touch and taste can alert us to the ways in which community is inhabited and lived" (Back, 2009, p. 207). As I will highlight through discussion of doodling, dwelling, and describing, paying attention to the experience



of space over time and through various methods allowed an attention to subtle and mundane changes, a process which enriched, rather than denied, a more conventional attempt to gather and analyse data and facts. Back's position sits in contrast to those which prioritise only interview and quantitative based work, and I am struck and inspired by his desire to use sensuous and multimodal immersions in everyday activities to stay "faithful to the conflicts and the opportunities that arise in multicultural everyday life" (2009, p. 213). The idea of faithfulness is fascinating to me, and central to my approach, because it seems to strike at something other than "truth", which is well understood as being outside the ethnographers capabilities (and desires) (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1996, p. 296), but it does so without thereby insisting that nothing meaningful or valid can be said. Faithfulness encapsulates a desire to attend seriously and sensitively to experience, of many kinds, even those which are contradictory or problematic (Horner, 2002; Pettinger, 2005).

### **Introducing slow methods: the three Ds**

My ethnographic methodology seeks to engage with The Hive as a space as it currently exists, rather than as we might like it to be. I am concerned less with evaluating behaviours and making recommendations, and more in offering the results of my 'listening' (Back, 2007). I adopted a "slow" ethnographic method which focused on dwelling in the building over the course of a calendar year, interviewing staff, doodling people and spaces, and then working with and (re-)describing the data through reflections and further doodles. Through this embracing of messiness and the rescinding of control it became possible for me to sense how the ostensibly limiting structures of PFIs, marketized HE, and local government interplayed with affective and empathetic encounters, productive conflict, and social education between different groups of people. In so doing, the aim of understanding The Hive's limitations and possibilities became visible through lenses of institutions (chapter four), professionalisation (chapter five), and affect (chapter six). Employing slow and inventive ethnographic practices in order to understand The Hive and its affective relationship with questions of the future of public education and space was a practice in the (re)iterative undoing of the rush for judgment, whilst also maintaining my own political belief in libraries as spaces of radical potential. Through engagement with the project (space, people, structures) and getting to know its contradictions and complexities over a prolonged period of time, it became instinctively necessary to challenge that rush for judgment and certainty, and engage with the messiness of "ethnography-understood-as-the-qualitative-method" (Brewer, 2000, p. 19; Skeggs, 2001).

## Dwelling

This “slow” methodology applied both to the fieldwork process and to the data analysis and writing up processes, and I began bundling up a series of connotations within this approach. In terms of fieldwork, slow for me meant gradual, deliberate, unhurried, speculative. “Slow” was a mode that allowed me to match the mood of the library and move with it. Though certainly institutions of drama and importance, libraries are also institutions of public life which contain the mundane, the everyday, routine and repetition (Given and Leckie, 2003). Matching my own fieldwork practice to the rhythms of The Hive by becoming part of that routine was a prefigurative reflection of my desire to meet the aims of my thesis through this process of “dwelling” (Lyon, 2019). Thinking about Elizabeth Freeman’s work on “queer time”, there is something in her description which also seems fitting to the slow temporality of a library: “the point may be...to be interested in the tail end of things, willing to be bathed in the fading light of whatever has been declared useless” (Freeman, in Eichhorn, 2013 p. 25). In addition to an obvious reading that libraries are also considered to be institutions themselves fading into obsolescence, or even already useless, the idea of being “bathed in the fading light” suggests a dwelling quality that is in keeping with the aim of my thesis being centred around everyday life and affective engagement.

“Slow” also suggested the timescale of the fieldwork; it would take time to get to know a place. Sustaining engagement over a prolonged period of time is a mark of ethnography (Skeggs, 2001, p. 246) though “rapid ethnography” aims to circumvent this requirement (Khoo, Rozaklis and Hall, 2012, p. 83). I had more than a year to be slow in, dropping in and out of The Hive before and long after I had finished my formal interviews and intensive fieldwork period. The formal calendar year also took in an academic year, and this allowed me to notice the swelling and sagging of the space as it was affected by the university cycle, as well as the other yearly rhythms of seasons, thereby experiencing the rhythms of The Hive’s two communities. Taking a year was not only about getting a representative picture – “a year in the life”. Taking a year and taking it slowly gave me the chance to dwell and let insights and orientations come to me that I could not have foreseen.

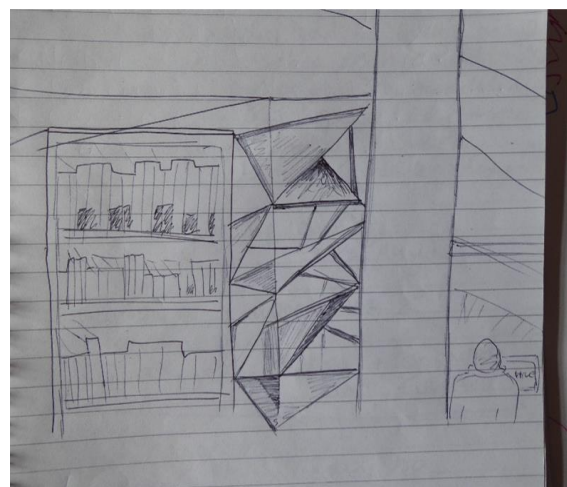
Slowness as it relates to time, disposition, and dwelling shapes the context of my engagement with The Hive. Dwelling, as described by Ingold (2011) means “literally to be embarked upon a movement along a way of life” (p9) and carries a concern with being with the world. This extended physical dwelling allowed dwelling in its other sense, as a rumination; I could dwell both on and in The Hive.

## Doodling

The second component of this slow methodology concerned doodling as both a methodological and analytical process of “enhanced seeing” (Causey, 2017, p. 13). The following section looks at how I came to employ doodles at all points of the fieldwork and writing up process in multiple ways: to relax and settle into the field of the library and allow myself to be attentive to details, affects, and moments of what I am calling “ordinary empathy”. It also served as a way of experimenting with different methods of representing these details: some sketches served simply as personal reference points for my written descriptions at a later date, some would be included in their own right, as communications in this thesis. These could bundle up emotions graphically and be explorations and explications of some of the complex features of The Hive. Drawing creates rather than copies, and as Taussig has argued it is important “not for what it records so much as what it leads you on to see” (Taussig, 2011, p.22). Doodling became something that was not about scale or likeness but attending to a kind of truth of my position in relation to people.

My first relationship with doodling was a way of enjoying The Hive and settling into the field. “Dialectogram” artist Mitch Miller calls this period “gathering” and I, like him, spent time at my fieldwork site initially in this state, drawing and writing as a ways to get a “feel for it, who the people are, how they use it, what they feel about it” (Miller, 2014). In terms of the style, I found that drawing particular architectural and material features of The Hive and its users in an artistically rough and sketchy, yet emotionally attentive way was most valuable in this period. My doodle of the Kaleidoscope sculpture from The Hive’s entry space (figure 4) the space served this function.

The doodle of the kaleidoscope took me about ten minutes to do and was a conscious meditation on lines, angles, and movements. Having an angular sketch of the hanging artwork served little obvious instrumental purpose, but it was a meditative process and it encouraged a slowing down, a focusing, and a way of initially attuning myself to the charged atmospheres of The Hive around me (Stewart, 2011). Drawing was about how I



**FIGURE 4**

learned to see, and drawing it was a way of being honest about what I saw and took [drew?] from The Hive. As Kushnir also makes clear, this is part and parcel of ethnography as a method in itself: “both anthropology and drawing are ways of seeing and also ways of knowing the world” (Kuschnir, 2016, p. 105).

Similarly, while trying at all times to rescind pride and self-consciousness surrounding the “quality” of my doodles (Causey, 2017), I sometimes sought to draw in this sketchy quality

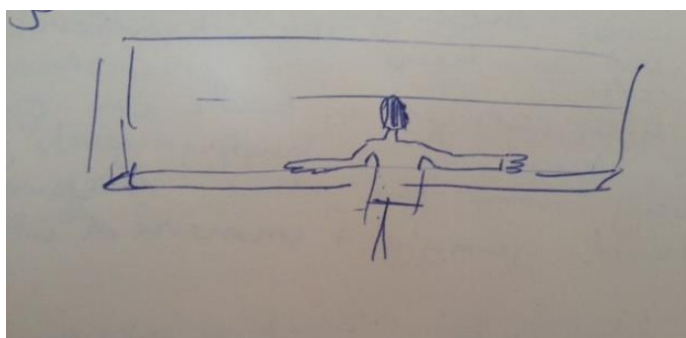


**FIGURE 5**

when attending quietly to people using the space. My drawing of the working man (fig 5) at his desk served a similar function to that of the kaleidoscope. I had been sitting behind him in the sociology section and had been taken by his manner, which was suggestive to me of someone “at home” - in the space, and with himself. It was an early example of seeing people doing “work from home” in the library, and I was interested in capturing a leisured

disposition and soft presence which a cartoon style doodle would not have caught. As in this case, I mostly doodled in amongst my other written observations in my research diary.

Sometimes deliberative and sketchy, other times dashed out with speed and urgency, doodling among my written research diary jottings was additionally a way for me to engage what were sometimes quite strong feelings of sadness. There is growing research around the role of emotion in social research concerning both subject and researcher (Service, 2012). However, this research is primarily associated with studies concerning “sensitive topics” (Watts, 2008; Mendonça, 2018). While an ethnography of The Hive is not a sensitive topic in the same way that an in-depth piece of research into medical conditions or social injustices might be, I nonetheless felt strongly affected by witnessing and engaging with so many people whose lives were visibly challenging. I wrote in my



**FIGURE 6**

research diary after one month at The Hive that I had “got on the train already. Too crap to stay watching the regulars on *okcupid*, desperate scrolling, usual guy asleep by the lift”. I do not mention these feelings because I think they are normal, useful, or that I could know for sure that the people I felt sad for were sad for themselves. In fact, I feel quite sure they are not particularly useful feelings and were possibly, at times, quite patronising and reductive. But they were there, and they were affecting how I viewed The Hive. Doodling people was, for me at least, a better, and perhaps healthier, way to engage. The man in Figure 6 is one such example. I was capturing something which had felt quite sad and poignant, in ways that affected me but which I would have been unable to describe well in words: a man in his early seventies, carrying a plastic bag and wearing a suit jacket over a casual outfit and jeans. He approached the window that looked out onto the city of Worcester, spread his arms against the sill, and sighed.



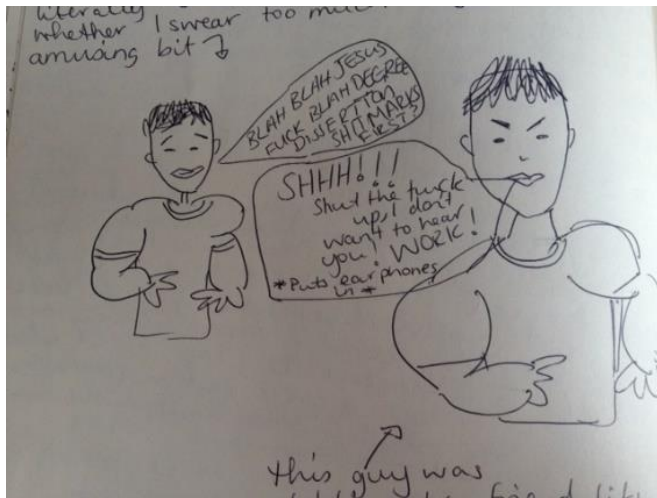
**Figure 7**

Drawing was a way of staying with sad emotions, and sometimes even a way of moving beyond them. Doodling and reflecting allowed me to experiment with other ways of seeing the same things; the man’s sigh could have been happy, the back slapping by a group

of adults with special needs (**Figure 7**) was euphoric and uplifting. As Sarah Pink argues, “it is not simply a matter of anthropologists analysing their informants’ drawings but one of learning through their images about how they feel, see and experience the world” (Pink 2004 p. 9). Through doodling I learned to engage with the moment I found myself in, rather than creating stories about how these sad circumstances had come about.

Other doodles are much less of an attempt at “accuracy” and were instead comic (to me at least) and done with a conjuring up of emotions and reactions which served as reminders and communicators. Unlike the “values-based” work of Mendonça (2018), these more cartoonish efforts did not arise out of interactions with those I drew. However, like Mendonça’s, I aimed to use this style of observational doodling to bundle up and communicate different scenarios and experiences in a clear and emotive way. With these styles, I would generally be drawn to a striking feature of a person or interaction (back-slapping, laughter, relaxation, awkwardness) and would then speedily re-draw the event or

person with exaggeration of some material feature that, to me, exemplified the emotionality of the scene.



**FIGURE 8**

to each other in a bragging fashion about how much work they were doing, what marks they needed, what they were doing later. Conversely, another observation of people at The Hive – often young people who I decided were students – was a reticence to engage with strangers, a disconnection which was exemplified by a literal (and possibly psychological) attachment to electronic devices. In both cases, I substantially exaggerated and accentuated features to be more evocative and amusing to myself:

With the first drawing (Figure 8), I accentuated the muscles, facial features, and speech styles of the two young males, to show their confidence, dominance, and posturing. In the second sketch (Figure 9), I eliminate most extraneous features to draw attention to the electrical wires and technology which I felt were pinning him to his laptop - and away from engaging with The Hive around him.

I feel somewhat uncomfortable with the association that can be made between this kind of doodling and an unkind or reductive caricaturing of people. Drawing on Max Weber's theory of ideal types, Andrew Causey calls his version of these "type" drawings, and freely admits them to be



**FIGURE 9**





I came to be thinking about myself in my doodles almost by accident and recognising the need to situate myself within my view of the building came as a methodological turning point. As an ethnographic project, I spent a long time feeling my way around the space of The Hive, literally drawing myself into it with my doodles, and being confronted by often strong emotions. Drawing people, overheard snippets of speech, and representing occasions and events in haphazard doodles meant that I was drawn into their space, and attentive to the emotional charge I felt in connection to them.

In an early drawing of a library space, I initially drew myself sat as a stickman outside The



**FIGURE 11**

Hive (Figure 10). In looking at my position, sat physically at a distance from the object of my study, looking in, I reflected on how detached I appeared (Figure 11). It became a key moment in analysis and methodology when I reflected on the fact that, at that point in my ethnography, I was resistant to the atmospheres – which I often found fractious and fraught – that were being created in the space in and around the library.

Embracing the mist-like substance that arose between people and objects meant coming to

see my method of drawing as a way of being attentive and empathetic in a prediscursive way. Seeing myself within The Hive rather than on the outside was an exercise in learning to “be affected” (Latour, 2004).

The final style of graphic that forms part of my slow methods was that of diagrams, flow charts, organisational representations (Figure 12). These were particularly pertinent to my research questions focusing on the nature of academic and public space (covered in chapter five), and to the ways that different professional processes coalesce in the dual staffing structure (covered in chapter six). In these chapters, I look to the organisation of The Hive, and create diagrams and floorplans which depict the project as I see and experience it, as an alternative to the official Hive-produced narrative. Karina Kuschnir’s belief that “images facilitate the assimilation of ideas” (Kuschnir, 2016, p. 110) holds true for the diagrammatic graphics as well. I place significant value in my research aim to understand the life and stories of The Hive as experienced by staff and users, in relationship to but also sometimes in contrast with the “official” line. As such, in redrawing organisational staff structures, floorplans, funding structures and money-flows, I am aware of and engaging with the fact



that images and graphics like this are used by organisations to communicate ideas, to tell one particular story. In reworking them, I am interrogating these stories based on my own experience.

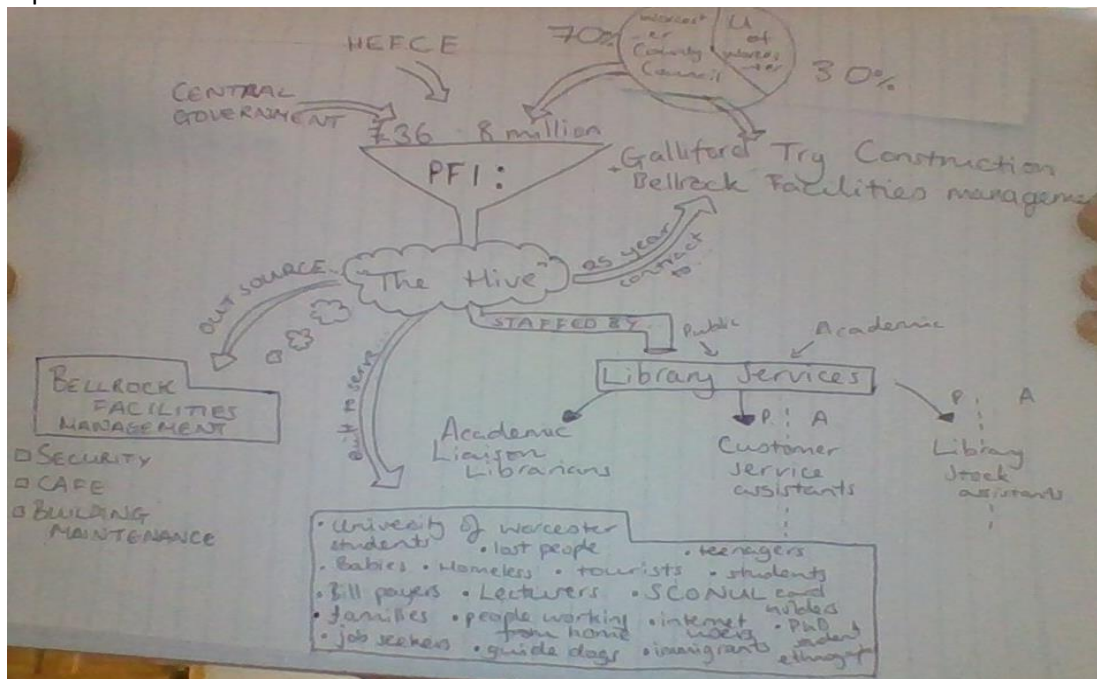


FIGURE 12

## Description

The final D of my amalgamated slow methodology, description, is about engaging with writing as a method rather than thinking of it only as a representation of other methods. I have tried to take the “-graphy” of ethnography seriously as an element of my slow methods in its own right, which, as Taussig explains, stems from the Greek *grapho*, “to draw or to write” (Taussig, 2011, p. 36). Describing The Hive is connected to how I use my voice and has a reflexive complexion. I will talk about my position in this sense below; however, I first want to explain my thinking around description as a method. Though “description” tends to be set as landing on the wrong side of social research – as the antithesis to “analysis” – I want to use it positively. It is not only the case that “silent authorship” is a “myth” (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1996). It is also the case that, for me, seeking to describe affect and experience necessitated embracing an intentionally audible voice (Lyon, 2019, pp. 80-81).

Firstly, description as a method relates to how I approached writing and drawing while in the field, at The Hive. Writing a mixture of fieldnotes, notes from reading, longer vignettes, and “write-ups” all in the library environment meant there was often a fluidity as one form of writing spilled into the other. As Pettinger has argued, “it is ‘in the field’ that the process of

creating an account of the social world begins” (Pettinger, 2005, p. 348), and I felt I was afforded an opportunity to embrace that in The Hive literally through multiple writings and descriptions. Ingold’s (2011) criticism that the ethnographer “turns away in order to write” (p. 179) was probably not intended to be “solved” by someone just writing in the field – and I certainly still “turned away” to some extent despite being physically in the library. However, being there made the interaction between observation, participation, writing and drawing slippery and iterative in a way that benefitted faithfulness and insight.

Secondly, a key feature of The Hive and my research into it concerns layers of in/visibility, complicated relationships and partnerships. Describing how the project played out in the space and in interaction with its official documents had a methodological significance in terms of giving an account of a place rife with sometimes confusing structures and viewpoints. If an aim of ethnography is to tell a “vivid narrative” to “someone who was not there” (Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2014, p. 276), then taking time to describe features of this is essential even if it is not immediately critical or analytical.

Finally, description is of political and theoretical importance. As I discussed in the review of literature in chapter two, I aim in this thesis to softly differentiate myself from “crisis” talk and “crisis” solutions. While being very committed to understanding and resisting the existence of exploitative social relations, description is related to the political imperative of “weak theory” (Stewart, 2008; Gibson-Graham, 2014). Though themselves taking very different lines of action and objects of research, JK Gibson-Graham and Kathleen Stewart are guiding lights here. Like them, I embrace description in order to bring “nuance, diversity, and overdetermined interaction” which is not there to “elaborate or confirm what we already know” but to sit with, and yield to, emerging knowledge (Gibson-Graham, 2014, p. 149). As I argued in the opening chapter of this thesis, thinking through The Hive as a “container” for difficult conversations, necessitates a sensitivity with language. I hope to do justice to the many voices within and around The Hive by taking care here.

### **Shy researcher in the library**

Now that I have set up my research and the methods through which I became invested in the attending to and capturing of affective transitions in the library space, I will present a vignette from an encounter with a regular user of The Hive, a woman called Sue. The vignette speaks to the way these methods developed, and how they responded directly to my approach for investigating the limits and possibilities of The Hive in terms of an expansive interpretation of the idea of integrated knowledge and space.

My engagement with Sue spoke both to the possibility of ethnography as a methodology and to the key concern of understanding integration and public space at The Hive. To me, it represented an empathetic meeting which affected me, and seemed to bring both parties out of a kind of passivity and solitude. The meeting embodied Carolyn Pedwell's suggestion that "through empathetic identification with another...one can open oneself up to different ways of knowing" (Pedwell, 2012 p. 164). I am attentive to the ways that ordinary experiences of engagement – both interpersonal and otherwise - constitute important "affective (self) transformations" based on the presence or absence of empathy. I understand empathy as an experience which has an educational capacity but which isn't about walking around in someone else's shoes. I am not assuming that this is possible, and don't think it's necessarily desirable either. I'm thinking about empathy as a process that has the potential to move you outside and away from a state of passivity, and into a comfortable vulnerability where micro developments/transformations can take place.

### Meeting Sue

*Sue was watching "First Dates" on a TV catch-up website. I'd seen her many times but had never approached her. I go into the exchange with some baggage of my own. I'd been dwelling on other things, about the idea of shyness in ethnography, and how the choices I made in who to talk to were so conditioned by my own fears of awkward, embarrassing, or even threatening exchanges. In addition to the increasing unusualness of random friendliness in public spaces, the library is particularly peculiar. It's a place where it's unusually commonplace to be alone, a place people visit to do a large variety of things, are there for a variety of reasons. To disrupt this comes with an element of risk: for one thing I'm giving tacit permission to be talked to in return, and secondly, I'm interrupting a stranger who might have come to the library with the explicit desire to be alone in company. There's some danger, and some guilt.*

*Sue was wearing earphones, which made her immediately less approachable, but somehow I felt the fact that they were pink, and that she was smiling calmly at the desktop computer screen, made her appear more open and relaxed. Sue was probably in her late forties, with long dark hair, and a lot of silver jewellery. When I started talking, she looked a bit surprised but quickly became at ease. She had a very wide smile that grew when I said I was doing some research at The Hive and asked her if she minded me talking to her: "I absolutely love The Hive, I'd be lost without it".*

*She quickly slipped into telling me a lot about her life whilst ostensibly talking about The Hive. She visits The Hive 4-5 times a week – almost every day – and travels all the way from a small village the other side of the Malvern Hills – so only just in the same county. I nodded when she said the name of the village – Colewell – and she asked if I know it, with a twinkle in her eye, obviously able to tell I’ve been bullshitting with my nods. When I admitted I didn’t, she laughed, and I felt a bit silly. She comes to The Hive to “do research”, watch TV shows and write letters, but she “doesn’t touch the books”, wafting a hand towards the fiction shelves behind us. I asked what she’d do without The Hive and she says she’d have to buy a computer or “pester her son for his” – “it’s all money isn’t it”.*

*I ask more about what she means by “research”, and this is where the whole conversation sails away from me and my own research for about ten minutes. She had recently started doing stand-up comedy, and the huge smile returned as she began to talk about it. It started “as a bit of fun when I was drunk at my friend’s house, but it went really well! And now I’ve done loads of gigs in pubs in Worcester and even Birmingham!” So the research is for material? “Yeah, it’s plagiarism! Don’t tell anyone! Well, I do some plagiarised stuff, and some original material”. I feel my mind is a bit boggled...and ask “ok, is it like a one woman show?” “It’s observational humour” (suddenly serious and proud, no smile). “oh...”. I found her odd but enjoyable to talk to, very different to anything I could have expected, and I realised I didn’t want the conversation to end yet. So I asked her if doing stand-up has changed or helped her. The smile returns: “Sooooooooo much, I’m a bit crazy in relationships, I go mad, and get nervous and panic and think ‘oh my god when is this going to end?’ and ruin it. And I started seeing this new guy and I started getting so anxious again! You know what I mean? It’s terrible! Then I found when I was doing stand-up it made me so much calmer in the rest of my life! It petrifies me, I get such bad stage fright for days, but the rest of my life seems like nothing! You’ve just got to do it haven’t you?” I agreed and started to reflect on myself a bit. I find it can help to just plough on into things that are scary, pretending that they aren’t, I said. I’m pretty circumspect as I say this I think, but she seems to immediately catch onto the fact that perhaps this very exchange had required a bit of that from me: “absolutely, I mean studying can be scary, I bet your PhD is scary, but, you know, you’ve got to get stuck in and you’ll be great in the end”. We joked together about how I needed to keep approaching people to talk to them about The Hive, and Sue encouraged me just to “pounce”,*

*laughing. The exchange shifted from The Hive, to her, to me, and when I left she said it had been nice to talk and I said the same. (Research Diary reflection)*

On a substantive level, Sue illustrated the multiplicity of ways to consider the life and activities of a library like The Hive. By some happy fluke, as a member of the public essentially surfing the internet, she used the words “research” and “plagiarism”, two terms laden with academic connotations. Because I did not expect to hear them in that context, the words tingled in the air, and encouraged me to reflect on their subjective nature and the assumptions I had made of them. While researching a space, institution, project like The Hive it was easy to fall into binaries like public, academic, work, leisure, and from that to search for “rules” about who did what where. It also reminded me of the multiplicity of activities and identities that could play out in The Hive, by any of the social groups using it, and that those groups themselves could also occupy several identities at any one time.

Methodologically however, this encounter with Sue was perhaps more poignant. It marked an important shift in the way I related to my research aim of understanding the lived experience of “integration” at The Hive and to my choice of ethnography as methodology. The encounter I shared with Sue felt like a moving away from a transactional conversation, to the point that she was almost in control and very comfortable in attempting to relate what she was saying about her personal life to mine. The affective complexion of the encounter was of a low level and unarticulated empathy, which felt simultaneously profound and every day. It relied on a risk being taken by both parties, to relate to each other and be open to the vulnerability that might come with it, despite knowing this would be no more than a fleeting encounter.

Brief though it was, the encounter demonstrated to me how straightforward, “neutral” conversations in ethnographic interviews have the potential to lead to emotional exchanges that bring all those involved out of a researcher-participant dynamic and into a challenging and positive experience. Sennett and Cobb’s observation that a particular participant in their research “did not so much grant an interview as give a confession” (p. 24) rang true, and its gentle poignancy forced a movement from myself away from the researcher looking in, to one library user engaging with another. Sennett and Cobb’s portrayal of interview-as-confession pointed to the fact that in asking questions about participants’ everyday life, the answers were likely to pull at participant’s deeper sense of self, and that in some cases, this could be defensive, cathartic, and expansive. In my case, the exchange went beyond confessional, which is principally a one-way transaction. Because of what my conversation

partner asked, shared, and brought out in me, I was made very much aware of the two-dimensional confessional aspect of ethnographic interviews. As such, the exchange made me reflect a lot afterwards, and helped me make progress with the “performative identity work” (Goffman, in Scott et al, 2012, p.717) that I had been subconsciously making sense of for months before.

## **Location of self and site**

The final section of this chapter turns to my relationship with The Hive, with Worcester and with the practicalities of my fieldwork. By spending a year in one place and engaging with The Hive as an evolving project, my senses were not only attuned to the community I studied, but also to my relationship to it: over the year I was a researcher looking at the space, a student writing a PhD in the space, and a former librarian with half a thought on my own impending post-PhD employment precarity, wondering where I might be after submitting (as a librarian again, in academia, or something else). I am also someone with personal connections to Worcester, having grown up in a small village ten miles outside. Returning to The Hive daily from my home in Birmingham meant walking the same route across town from the train station as I did as a teenager, the streets, and the shops and bars on them, all so familiar to me. I met up with my mum and dad for coffee, sometimes went home to the house I grew up in overnight, occasionally bumped into people I used to know.

Without wishing the thesis to become the kind of “misery memoir” The Hive itself might stock, I nevertheless had to interrogate my teenage perception of the city of Worcester. Early in my research diary I started referring to it, as Hanif Kureishi (1990) does in “The Buddha of Suburbia”, as a “leaving place”. This was not a great observation on several levels. Firstly, Worcester is not a suburb, and this is not a PhD about suburbs. Secondly, the label “leaving place” reflected my eighteen-year old’s feelings about the region, wanting to move to a big city. But I had to reflect on the fact that it would not be everyone’s feeling, that students in particular might have left somewhere else to arrive at Worcester, and that whilst my voice was important, it was not a very convincing attempt at “faithfulness” to label it in this way.

The experience of ethnography was therefore laced with a kind of “insider” perspective in several ways: the sense of it being my hometown, of me being a “qualified” librarian studying libraries, of me being a student able to easily engage with The Hive at an academic level (through the SCONUL access scheme) and as a member of the public (I got a library card and ran up a healthy overdue fine through my parents’ Worcestershire address being on my driving license). But I was also an outsider in almost the same ways: in the sense of re-

engaging with my rejection of the city and struggling with seeing it with “fresh” (whatever they are) eyes, in feeling like I was neither quite a sociologist nor a librarian anymore.

### Ethnographic visits and interviews

I now turn to the practicalities of the period of ethnographic fieldwork and ethical considerations I undertook at The Hive. I spent one year visiting The Hive between August 2017 and August 2018, though I returned to The Hive less intensively throughout the four years of my PhD (September 2015-September 2019). During this year, I usually visited between 3-4 times a week. I chose to visit The Hive in such a way that by the end of the year I had experienced the building at all hours that it was open: seeing it open at 8.30am, and close at 10pm. I also varied the time during the day, and the days of week, using this differentiation to notice the changing rhythms of the building.

At several points in that year I visited The Hive more frequently. For example, over the Christmas period I went to The Hive more frequently because I perceived that time to be a period of particularly interesting transition and negotiations. I discuss in chapter six how different types of students visited The Hive over Christmas - University of Worcester students, students from other universities who returned to their hometown, as well as school students who had broken up for holidays. As such I gained insight into the negotiation between different types of student, which not only usefully problematised the categories of “student” and “public”, but also gave insight into how different classifications seemed to be made in-the-moment.

In addition to dwelling, doodling and describing The Hive as someone “using” the library, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with eighteen members of Hive staff. Three were with senior managers, eleven were with librarians employed by the University, four were with public library employed staff. The weighting towards academic librarians is explained by two things: firstly, the academic librarians were less easily accessible for ethnographic interviews than many members of staff working on the library floor because they had primarily office-based jobs. As such, I had to positively seek them out through email, while informal chats and observations make up some further data for public facing workers. Secondly, I went into this research originally with a particular interest in the evolution of the library profession and how it has been affected by the internet and by the steady erosion of public funding (and the steady flow of private capital taking its place). As one of the dominant trends in the library profession has been the near total eradication of “qualified” librarians in public libraries (CILIP, 2012), none of the library workers at The Hive employed by the county council are



“professional” librarians. As such, I relied on the academic librarians primarily for this line of questioning, while also gaining reactions on the so-called division between public and academic librarianship from both parties.

The interviews varied in length but were generally forty to fifty minutes. In five cases I met up with interviewees multiple times, either for further formal interviews, or for less formal catchups and fact checks. The length and the doing of multiple interviews was unplanned; I created a crib sheet of topics I wanted to cover (Appendix 1) but I often geared questions towards narratives and experimented with different things, so it was a generally iterative process. I met interviewees over coffee, and often the length of the interview extended naturally because of a relaxed rapport and conversation and reflection. Because I was prioritising interviewees’ personal reflections and narratives, relaxed conversational styles suited the interviews. I also really respected the people, and we had a lot to talk about; talking with them shaped my perceptions of the project.

I analysed the transcripts using several iterations of open coding. In keeping with my general preference for visual representations I initially preferred to code with pens and paper, creating thematic diagrams from transcripts. I also generally trusted my memory of impressions and integrated interview data with my research diaries and reflections, working a combination of reflection, interview quotation, and doodles into vignettes, excerpts from which are included in the thesis. Later on in the analysis period I used NVIVO to help manage the quantity of transcripts and codes. A selection of these codes includes: “value of Hive: positive”, “Old library view”, “management speak”, “confidence”. My continually reworked reflections spanned four large notebooks and enriched the “voice” of this thesis even when they are not directly quoted.

### **Situated ethics**

I negotiated ethical issues relating to participants both in the field and in the writing period. I obtained ethics approval from the Department of Sociology at Warwick in July 2016. I contacted management from The Hive prior to beginning my PhD and discussed my project with one manager who subsequently left The Hive before my fieldwork began. I gained confirmed access for research through conversation with three further managers in October 2016. Before beginning any interviews or observations I discussed with members of management what my research would entail and disseminated information sheets (Appendix 2). Given the singularity of The Hive and my interaction with its architectural and geographical placement, it would have been both detrimental to my research and almost impossible to



anonymise the institution itself. Added to which, The Hive management were happy for the institution to be named and for the research to be carried out very openly.

Following the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)'s "Framework for Research Ethics" (*ESRC Framework for research ethics*, 2015) I used informed consent for all interview participants. I supplied information sheets (Appendix 2) for formal interviews and talked through my research aims before asking them to sign a consent form (Appendix 3). As part of this pre-interview conversation I talked with participants about what level of anonymity they would feel comfortable with when it came to writing up. Despite several participants saying they did not mind their full names and job titles being in the thesis, I decided that pseudonyms and generalised job role categories would be most appropriate for several reasons. As I explained with reference to the "container" of The Hive extending to the reparative writing (Sedgewick, 2003) of this thesis, my treatment of individual participants related to a situated ethics. Although it is my intense hope and intention that no participant would feel criticised in my evaluations, I also recognise that an exploration of an institution will necessitate critical engagement. I hope never to be read as criticising individuals I spoke to, but neither did I want to feel resistant to interrogating some of their quotations closely.

Ultimately, allowing interview data to be more than simply disaggregated quotations was important, but precise identities and job titles were, on reflection, neither relevant nor helpful. As such, I chose to use first name pseudonyms and generalised job categories in the chapters that follow. I chose three categories: Manager, Academic Liaison Librarian (always shortened to ALL in citations), and Customer Service Assistant (CSA). Quotations from interview data used in the following chapters follow this format: first name, job category, Source (e.g. Interview). An example of a citation is: Mark, ALL, Interview. It was tempting to differentiate these job categories further: managers came from different "sides" of the project; ALLs had specific locations within academic subject areas which at times revealed insights into the different treatment of libraries in academic disciplines today; CSA included members of staff with quite different job roles. I resisted this urge for two reasons: firstly and importantly, general categories help with ensuring anonymity of individuals. Secondly, my main motivation for including job categories was fulfilled with general ones. It is essential for me to note the position of the speaker as they sit in relationship both to The Hive project and to the other workers, communities, and interests in the project. Since in the chapters that follow I interrogate the classificatory practices of different voices, professional identities, and communities as they negotiate integration, their position as either managers, Academic Liaison Librarians or Customer Service Assistants is pertinent.

I took varying approaches to obtaining consent for ethnographic interviews and reflections from a distance. On the whole, if I found myself “caught up” in an unplanned encounter in the building – which was often – I did not disclose my position or ask for express consent. Since these encounters were brief, not recorded, and usually of a general nature I chose to reflect on the general thrust of the conversation in my research diary after the event, and as such had neither names to anonymise nor a feeling that I was acting against their interests. If I went up to people in the space and asked them casual questions about what they were doing and what they thought of The Hive, I usually explained I was a student doing some research as a way in to the conversation rather than as a formal request for participation. This introduction was helpful as an icebreaker particularly when I talked to the young adults who congregated outside The Hive but who did not enter (discussed in chapter six). Somewhat disconcertingly, frequently, these – usually - high school students often responded to me as though I was their age, and I was even asked on one occasion which school I went to.

Overall, I engaged with ethical considerations throughout my PhD process and followed Calvey’s (2008) view that “engagement with the ethics of research is not a ritualistic tick box process that once done at the beginning of the project can then be obviated, but runs throughout the lifetime of a project (p. 909). As such, as I will illustrate below, I reflected on and altered my approach at points along the course of the fieldwork and especially when writing up.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have explicated my approach both to ethnography and to my research at The Hive. Through exploration of the components of “slow methods” I have demonstrated the varied way my commitment to being “true to the world as it plays out in people’s intellectual, embodied and affective experiences” (Lambert, 2018, p. 203), not least my own, play out. The component parts of my methodology – dwelling, doodling, and describing – have been chosen and developed not only to capture diverse ethnographic data but also to stimulate reflection and analysis.

In addition to describing how I situated myself in the field and engaged with the life of The Hive for the work of this thesis, I hope also to have illustrated my contribution to the field of live methods (Back and Puwar, 2012; Lambert, 2018). My attention to ‘slow’ methods prioritised unforced attentiveness to atmospheres and rhythms, embracing the messiness and sometimes awkwardness of the research process, and being inventive with artful data

collection and analysis. I also build on the work of Scot et al (2012) in consciously reflecting on “shyness” in the field and using the insight that can be gained from accepting rather than rejecting or denying relational shyness. This embrace of ethnographic shyness allowed me to propagate ordinary empathy with the everyday and mundane emotional barriers felt by so many relating to strangers in public space. It also offered the opportunity to notice their equally everyday subversions through encounter and convivial sharing.

Having set up the manner with which I engaged with The Hive, the chapter that follows explores the foundational stories of The Hive. Sitting with the slow methods explored here, I now turn to the institution at its broadest conception and interrogate its integration story.

## Chapter 4: Integrations, voices and worths: foundational stories and the futures of The Hive

### Vignette: “The Hive doesn’t exist!”

*“The Hive”, I am told in an email from a senior member of its staff, “doesn’t exist!”. This response was given in an answer to one of my many queries which, over the course of almost three years, essentially tried to get to the bottom of this peculiar institution, in order to explore its limits and possibilities as both a social and educational space.*

*The curious denial of The Hive’s existence in the email exchange did not feel to me as though it was intended in a disparaging or judgmental way, but merely as a descriptive correction. On this occasion, I had asked a manager a question about the employment structure of The Hive after reviewing our interview transcript. In our interview, they had said that they were one of a very small group of managers who were “integrated, so I work for both the university and the county council but everyone below me works for one or the other” (Claire, Manager, interview). This was confusing and seemed to come in contrast to the County Council or University staff who, though encouraged to share the integrated culture of “The Hive”, were more clearly separately employed. So what did it mean to be “integrated”? I initially wondered, and asked over email, was there, after all, an entity called “The Hive” for which these managers worked?*

*No. The Hive does not exist. These few managers were like all the other members of staff after all: employed, contracted and paid, not by The Hive, but by one or other of the partners. So, what did it matter that several of the highest up staff members in the building had this slightly different terminology, referred to as “officially joint employees” without there being an officially joint body to employ them? What did this nuance say about all the other members of staff, who, despite being employed by different organisations, studiously called themselves “Hive” employees? (Research Diary)*

The reflection this chapter begins with brought home to me the fact that The Hive is, and is not, several things. It is a building holding institutions; it is not its own institution in accounting or employing terms; it is its own institution in terms of service-standards and some level of organisational culture; it meant something for some people to be termed “officially joint employers” even when they were still only technically employed by one or the other. I sit with this and a second quotation taken from a published academic paper about The Hive, written by strategic management involved in the project at its inception:

*“there is no concept of an “academic” or “public” area within the same building” (Dalton, Elkin and Hannaford, 2006, p. 542).*

Both the email reflection and the published quotation make claims about what The Hive does, or tries to do. Taking both together, I am reminded of the interplay between hard and soft classifications, and the fact that, although one possible story for this thesis could be told primarily through its structures and limitations, another – mine – seeks to explore the unintended, contradictory, cultural effects and feelings and outcomes that emerge despite – because of? – seemingly rigid structures.

More questions emerged as I attempted over the course of my ethnography to pin things down. If The Hive is an integrated library, what, precisely, is the integration between? How is this integration understood? How is it experienced, and how might it change? And whatever answers I myself might come to, might other individuals answer these questions in significantly different ways? The simplicity of the questions explored in this first analytic chapter – what is The Hive, how can we know, and what does it do? – bely the complexity of any possible answer(s). In a sense, this chapter is reflective of the many hasty scribbblings and imperfect doodles, lost rabbit holes and ah-ha followed by oh-no moments that characterised much of my ethnographic journey. In seeking initially to describe “The Hive”, I ended up asking myself what it even was; A building? An accounting unit? A project? A library?

These questions matter not just in themselves, but because of the ways The Hive’s central ambiguities relate to the classifying nature of public and academic space.

## **Managing integration over time: chapter structure and arguments**

This chapter, then, seeks to explore what the integration is through foundational stories and foundational structures. In light of some of the contextual discussion of the thesis’ introductory chapter – the PFI, the professions, the squeezed public services – I pull at the values and ambiguities that form The Hive in the broadest sense, and the way that it holds

and interacts with wider processes of the privatisation of public space and services. Though never fully “static”, this first section focuses mostly on the foundations, formations, and defining narratives and claims of the project. Through looking at how the PFI is communicated and how the project’s stories are told by different actors, I argue that there is a central vulnerability to the project, and that this vulnerability is managed by converging differences and categories (“there is no public or academic”) while at the same time allowing other classifications to be made.

Following on from these more foundational considerations, I look at the temporality of The Hive and its evolving limitations and possibilities. Here, I reflect on the ways in which challenges between the constituent communities (university going, non-university going) have been negotiated by The Hive, and draw tentative conclusions of what these negotiations reveal about the way integration is felt and about its future promise. Picking up on the threads left by the first two sections, this section relates mainly to differential voices and differential treatment: the evolving notion of “student voice” and its relative strength in The Hive in relation to the county council voice and budget reality. Here I point to the fact that classification and convergence work in tandem: classificatory practices which tend to work in making some things more visible and some things less visible are expedient at points to placate demands of a community whose voice is stronger than another’s.

Altogether, I argue that The Hive is better understood as an *integration* project than an *integrated* one, calling to mind its ongoing-ness. I claim that the very fact of there being “things to integrate” allows classificatory practices to flourish when deemed necessary. Essentially I am interested in the extent to which the quotation from Dalton, Elkin and Hannaford (2006) above (there is no academic and public distinction in space) is felt and lived, and what the movements of the classificatory practices involved in maintaining this notion actually do to reinforce, resist, or transform those categories. As such, the foundation and futurity of The Hive project provides a snapshot not only for the possibilities and pitfalls of PFIs, but also about the evolving and interconnected roles of the university and public services in public life more generally.

### Institutional lens and documents

Using the lens structure, I call this chapter the “institutional” lens. It is institutional in the sense that I look to The Hive and its position in its broadest conception – as a building, a partnership, a library, the name of an accounting unit, an idea. As with other areas of this thesis, I am utilising sociological concepts and approaches. As such, my institutional approach

is in keeping with Institutional Ethnographies – first developed by Dorothy Smith - in the sense of “emphasising the value-laden nature of organisations” (Bolton, 2005, p. 40) and also emphasising the role of document and text in creating institutional narratives (Smith in Kearney et al., 2018) which have differential effects within and beyond institutional spaces (Billo and Mountz, 2016, p. 199). However, in keeping with the idea of The Hive as a container discussed in the Introduction, I seek to maintain a loose grip on the idea of an institution.

In this chapter I engage with a variety of sources which are communicated at different levels of visibility, including textual documents, encounters, and interview data. At the level of total visibility is text that any visitor to The Hive can easily see, and indeed must see if they want to engage with The Hive’s resources: the main website and online library catalogue for the integrated partners; information about The Hive and The Hub (council services) on the websites of The University of Worcester and Worcestershire Council; text on and around the building itself in the form of labels, posters, wall paint. The second set of documents concerns text which is not private but neither is it easily stumbled upon or commonly sought out by Hive visitors. This selection could be described as “semi-public” and includes academic articles, written by managers at The Hive or academics from the University of Worcester, which have been published in LIS or Business School academic journals. I also include the accounting form of The Hive in this category: the annual accounts of The University of Worcester and Worcestershire County Council and the “budget books”<sup>5</sup> of Worcestershire County Council. Both the journal articles and the accounts can be accessed by the public – annual accounts more easily than academic articles – but only the “budget books” were written with general public consumption in mind, and as such are revealing of how The Hive is communicated at different registers, especially when compared with the more visible public category. The final set of documents is communicated at the level of private/internal. This includes staff training resources for The Hive such as induction training for all new staff and internal board reports. I combine these textual documents with interview data with staff (management and workers employed by either partner), drawn diagrams, and ethnographic observations.

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<sup>5</sup>These are yearly leaflets intended for public use which highlight the yearly budget for different services regarding income, expenditure and staffing for the council. They also detail the relative income of the council (council tax, business rates, and government grants), and give explanations for year on year reductions in budget for particular services, including “libraries, museums and community services”

## Foundational stories and foundational structures

*I'm feeling a bit irrationally annoyed. The café staff just refused to refill my water bottle, and I'm eating my lunch at the desk I've been working at because I was told off the other day for eating food from home at one of the café tables. It's weird. Food in libraries was always such a disciplinary point (– think of the books and all those grubby fingers!) but now it's impossible for me to eat anywhere other than the main library. The private profit expectations of the café – run by a private company not in-house - feels at odds with The Hive being a public space. (Research Diary entry)*

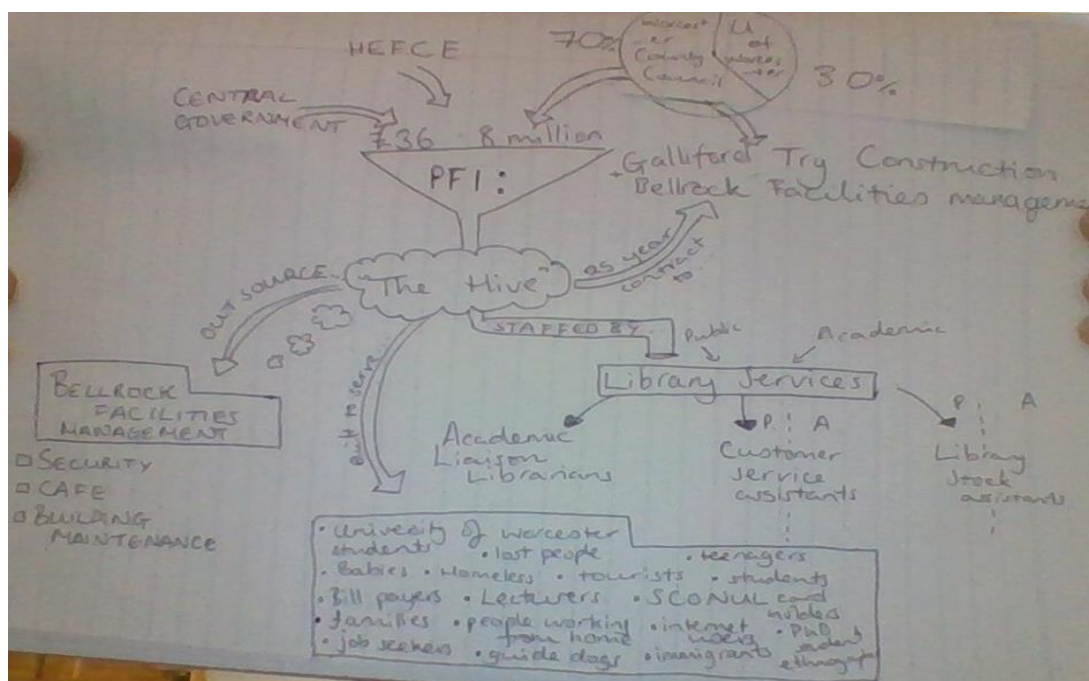


FIGURE 13

Figure 13 was one that I drew in attempting to visualise the processes that made and make up The Hive, and which I will discuss below. “The Hive” is central and is drawn in thought-bubble to point to its lack of formal existence. A PFI funnel is pouring the £36.8 million “credits” coming from HEFCE and Central Government into the Hive, and channels are coming from The Hive showing what comes out, both in terms of finances and people. The outsourcing of the security, café, building maintenance to Bellrock, as well as construction to Galliford Try, can be seen as expenses, and I wanted to give the impression of these companies – Bellrock and Galliford Try – being external to The Hive as an idea, if not a project. The box in the right hand corner was a quick effort to jot down all the different people/animals I’d observed using The Hive, including, “babies, job seekers, lost people,



teenagers, bill payers, time-killers, students from Worcester Uni, students from other unis, dogs". Though not necessarily relevant to the organisational structure, it felt important to me at the time to bring in as many inputs and outputs of The Hive in one place, and to make the point to myself that although a number of binaries seemed to tell one story of The Hive (public/private, university/"general public", professional/service), the "public" actually using the building is a multifaceted and intermingling of identities and social roles.

The quotation from my research diary above it is a different attempt at reflecting on the interplay of ideas around publicness and privateness that form part of the classifications and classificatory practices inherent to The Hive project's functioning: public and private activities (eating), public and private interests (the appropriateness of the activity changes according to the location), and their interactions with ideas of public and private space. That these considerations all play out in one building – in much more important ways than just where to eat my lunch! – is foundational to the interplay of public and private interest in the building.

### Partnerships: classifying publics and finance

Ostensibly, The Hive is a partnership between the University of Worcester and Worcester County Council. It is only these two institutions whose titles and logos adorn the outer brick walls of The Hive in shiny metallic letters. Direct recognition of the PFI is discrete, as the semi-visible signage in the entrance foyer made palpable. When I ask people using the building what they understand of The Hive they generally know it as a joint-use library, and I am told by a manager that "96 or 97% of people surveyed know it is a public and uni library" (Claire, manager, Interview). It is only these two institutions which sit at the bottom of publicity documents, guides to the building, and directional signage.

However, as with many formerly public institutions in Britain today, within The Hive there are further divisions than the two organisations mentioned, some visible, some concealed. Most additional partners are related to privatisation. Underneath the publicised partnership of two public organisations – the council and the university - The Hive is a pushing together of many other formerly distinct functions within British public life: Council Services, Public Library, University Library, Local Records Office and Archives, outdoor space, even public toilets. Organisationally, this is evident in The Hub council services, and its own shared contracts and governmental functions between it, the Department for Work and Pensions, The Job Centre, and Citizens Advice Bureau. Like many public libraries, The Hive runs a "job club" to help people apply for jobs and benefits, as well as many other adult education schemes.

Beyond these organisational understandings, however, we can also examine The Hive as an integration between two different user groups, or even two different ‘publics’. Reflecting on my own research diaries illustrated my own discomfort with slipping between labels in this way: early in my diaries I jotted down observations about “academic and public”, or, “university or public”. After reflection I then tried to stick with the more cumbersome but less exclusionary “university going” and “non-university going”. In so doing I was trying consciously to reiterate to myself the central premise from which I approached my entire PhD: that universities and academic knowledge are within the realm of the public, that they should not be the “property” of only those who have paid an additional fee (on top of general taxation), and also that people affiliated with universities were also members of the public. But it was through this personal process that it occurred to me that The Hive’s presentation and communication by staff essentially did this all the time, quite understandably. A central and malleable discomfort around who is who, who does what, who owes what, who has the right to and who does not, bubbled beneath the surface of integration. I felt that these encounters between people and objects suggested precariously accommodated notions of “worth”, and were negotiated live, though often through interaction with seemingly static documents, publicity, mission statements, and contracts.

It was at the level of their publics that The Hive was often articulated to me in ethnographic and semi-structured interviews. These two groups felt like they should technically be termed the “university-going public” and the “non-university-going-public”, but the “students” and “the public” were the terms I generally heard. The fact that The Hive as a project is often understood in terms of who the library attracts and serves, rather than which organisations are involved in “running” it, is probably not a particularly value-driven one most of the time. It makes sense that a project which is constitutionalised at a bureaucratic and financial level is not necessarily understood in those terms by those using it, or even by the staff working in it. However, in conceptualising the building as an integration between people, there was ample room for judgment, and for slippery understandings of differing notions of ‘worth’ to surface.

Further, this division between publics is not only about people. The question (or assumption) of what is council, and what is university, is also inextricably linked to what is understood as academic or public in terms of knowledge. How they are appealed to in practice is contingent

on levels of classification, and following the stories of different voices within The Hive's foundation therefore reveals something about how public space, knowledge, and education is negotiated in the basis of internalised and externalised worths. The PFI is also key to marking invisible processes of integration.

## The PFI

Attending both to the PFI that made The Hive possible, and to The Hive's containing of other public-private and outsourced service functions is important. As Krinsky and Simonet (2017, p. 133) argue in their study of the maintenance of New York City's parks, paying attention to these new forms of governance helps us make sense not only of them in themselves, but also "of the submerged alternatives, disagreements, contradictions, and areas of ambiguity that characterize them and are part of their foundation." These ambiguities are, I argue, essential to a certain vulnerability about The Hive.

Prior to and particularly since the Hive's opening, PFIs have come under heavy criticism. The idea of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) was first established in 1992, under the auspices of the newly appointed Conservative Prime Minister, John Major. Although Major was responsible for finally pushing it through, PFIs are aligned to the same strand of Thatcherite neoliberal thinking that sees public service investment as leading to the "crowding out of private investment, capital formation, and spending" (Hitchen, 2019, p. 50) believed – by that school – to be better for the economy. Unsurprisingly, PFI was met with considerable disapproval by the Labour opposition at the time, who, along with much of the general public, saw it as not only intrinsically problematic, but as part of a wider trend towards increased privatisation of public services. Advocates of PFI argue that private finance will only be considered if and when the benefits are greater than they would be if the public had direct control. Yet public officials charged with their particular duties – building bridges, keeping schools open, running hospitals – recognise that the reality is fundamentally different; if there is no public money, then PFI is their only option, and if PFI is their only option, then a case can always be made that it offers a better deal than conventional methods. As the Secretary of State for Health under Blair Alan Milburn once (in)famously stated, "it's PFI or bust" (Monbiot, 2002).

Although The Hive opened in 2012, by which time the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government had taken office, the planning process began ten years previously. Just as The Hive itself is formally a mixture of public and private, academic and non-academic, it

is also, discursively, a blend of varying and sometimes contrary social and political ideals. As such, this bleak reality leads to, at the very least, an ambiguity when we come to assess a project such as The Hive. The Hive's PFI may have been a positive and creative response to a patchwork of funding crises; it may have been unavoidable and impossible any other way, and it is not my desire to condemn The Hive's management for pursuing it. That does not change the fact that the PFI is itself reliant on a socio-economic philosophy which, it might be argued, is to blame for the crises that precipitated the lack of alternatives in the first place (Quiggin, 2019). Whatever The Hive's values as a partnership, its foundational story and future are connected to this binding of private and public. As such, the following section attends to the ambivalence and ambiguity created in relation to the PFI and explores how this leads into a sense in which The Hive's management and The Hive's staff appeal to different rationales to explain and accommodate the project.

In an article written by those involved in The Hive's management prior to its opening, the process is described as having come about following a:

*successful bid under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), a UK government initiative to encourage the development of private finance in the public sector (HM Treasury, 2005). In September 2005 the DCMS and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) announced the award of £36.8 million credits for the Worcester joint use library. (Dalton, Elkin and Hannaford, 2006, p. 540)*

In the case of The Hive, the university accounts for 30%, and the Council for 70% of the costs. Both partners make an annual payment to Galliford Try, the construction company which won the contract to "design, build, finance and operate the building" (The Hive, 2019) back in 2009. The University and the Council will pay the annual service payment for the 25-year duration of the PFI contract, eventually sharing the building 30:70 at the end of it. Within the building and in terms of its ongoing costs, the private outsourcing company Bellrock takes responsibility for facility management, the running of The Hive's café, and the building's security.

PFI contracts are intransigent and hard – if not impossible - to change, and as I will discuss in the second section of this chapter, they are thus a source of vulnerability if taken simultaneously with other budgets (such as the County Council's) that frequently change. As Froud et al (2017, p. 82) argue: "Contracts do not allow for future states easily... the state is

politically disadvantaged by contracts which create a fantasy of controllability over future costs that appear to shield the state from risk, while leaving it less well placed to deal with uncertainty.”



**FIGURE 14**

## Terms of Integration

Having discussed the financial foundation of The Hive, my next route into understanding the project as it communicates at an institutional level is by following the trail of the terms chosen to describe and conjure it both in official and everyday contexts. I focus on mission statements, and the language of integration, joint-use, and

community specifically. Sara Ahmed’s work (2012, p. 12) on what she calls “an ethnography of texts” is pertinent here, as is Massey’s (2013) interest in “vocabularies of the economy”. The language used to describe The Hive is significant in terms of what it reveals about the overall aims versus understandings of it as a project by those involved at strategic and worker level. As Ahmed says, “following documents is also about following the actors who use those forms” (p. 12). Relating to The Hive, it is also to highlight the complexity of connotations that surround the project and its motivations, and the fact that their slippery nature is inbuilt and perhaps unavoidable within a promise-orientated idea which must marry up divergent interests with private business.

## Success stories and mission statements: The Hive as a point of principle

The Hive’s official documentation and publicity is peppered with abstract nouns. The floors of the library are not descriptive but imperative: floor one is “Discover”, two is “Explore the past”, three is “Read, learn, imagine”. Floors four and zero slip out of style slightly: “shared study” and “group study” respectively. The values shown in Figure 14 are included in staff training documents and can also be found on The Hive’s public website.

Several members of staff spontaneously talk to me about these values and their centrality to the foundational stories of The Hive. One librarian says: “I think that one of the earliest meetings that I remember was when we all went for a big gathering and we all discussed

values...and missions...and ethos. I still remember that. And I can still see those things being carried through today. Those sorts of slogans and logos and things” (Susan, ALL, Interview). Similarly, another seems to suggest that the values themselves form part of the partnership’s decision-making process: “I think we absolutely still refer back to the vision, and it’s very core, and it makes us, it helps us make decisions, so it’s still very strong” (Claire, Manager, Interview).

These values are integrated with the views of The Hive’s management as to why the project came about. Understandably, the two members of management staff that I spent time with – Claire and Linda - make the most reference to The Hive as a project that came from a good idea, willpower, vision and tenacity. Linda terms this a “point of principle”, saying:

*[The idea of the Hive] was a point of principle. At the time [it was planned], universities were still pretty much funded by public money, by taxes... Students weren’t paying substantial fees, and I think we felt as a point of principle; if Worcester tax payers were effectively paying for the university and paying for the books in the university why shouldn’t they be able to access them. And it was that point of principle (Linda, Manager, Interview)*

Linda goes on to contend that this line of argument – one that is implicitly referring to a “rights” based society – became more “complicated” by the time The Hive opened, because of the issue of the HE’s financial transformation and the trebling of student fees in 2012. However, and despite that, Linda feels it has an ethical purpose beyond “rights”:

*It’s very much an ethical thing that we should make what we can available to people who wouldn’t otherwise have it, and it’s certainly part of the university’s ethos that they want to be seen as a public good, and that is really strong. And it’s probably there to an extent with all the universities but particularly at Worcester there’s this absolute clarity that we should be contributing to the local community, and The Hive is one very very obvious way we do that. (Linda, Manager, interview)*

Though definitely impressive and fully felt, the sense given here in what Linda says tends towards a view of the university as philanthropic. The idea of the university as a “public good” is cited, but without a recognition that, if that were still the case, then publics beyond those explicitly linked to the university ought therefore to have a stake in it, rather than a

“contribution”. On the University of Worcester’s website, the collaborative effort of The Hive is reflected, but only after the sentence: “we welcome visitors from all over the region to our Hive library” (University of Worcester, 2019) framing it as a contribution from the university. Thus, the principle of The Hive is communicated by the University as charitable rather than political, and it reflects the fact, highlighted by Boden et al (2012, p. 19) that “the wide variety of groups in the surrounding society who might be said to have an interest in universities – the public, taxpayers, employers, students, their parents and others – have access to few mechanisms with which to seek alignment between their concerns and university activities.” Claire, another manager, presents a similarly values-based vision for the project, and firmly corroborates the idea that it was down to people, ideas and some luck that The Hive succeeded:

*I think the timing was exactly right for The Hive to happen when it did. I think the city is exactly the right size, I think the university has exactly the right aims and objectives. [The university of Worcester is] very community focussed. I think the leaders in post were exactly the right leaders at exactly the right time. They were very visionary and very ambitious, and they were very tenacious, and they also had joint aspirations. So, I think that combination of everything coming together is what made The Hive happen. (Claire, Library Manager, Interview)*

The endorsement of the vision statements evident here in both Linda and Claire’s description of The Hive feels emotional and unequivocal. Although both also discuss the challenges of the project and its ongoing transformations, in these explanations it feels as if there is no room for any doubt – “exactly, exactly”. This idea that it was individual effort driven by ethics and values rather than any kind of pragmatism is understandable in its attempt to smooth over antagonisms.

Despite generally conceding that they admire the idea of The Hive, and enjoy working there, members of staff I interview who are employed as academic liaison librarians have more mixed feelings about the reasons behind The Hive and its success compared with management. Repeatedly, I am told by staff that The Hive was the best library that either side of the partnership could have hoped for. This is not a criticism in itself; literature of similar projects in the US state that a key “success factor” to aim for is that “the level of service provided [is] equal to, or better than, that which could be provided in separate facilities”

(Bundy and Amey, 2006, p. 503). However, the way it is framed by parties I interview suggest that they see the challenges that would otherwise have faced the County Council library or the University of Worcester Library as the primary driver for the project, rather than a utopian vision based on principles alone.

Generally, there is a sense from staff aside from management that The Hive had to accommodate differences in order for either to get a library at all. The university-employed librarians were the most emphatic. Mark says: “we would never have the library we have now if it hadn’t been for the collaboration, the cohabitation was central” (Mark, ALL, interview). Another academic librarian shares this sentiment, but goes further than Mark by saying a university-only library would have been preferable, and suggesting that The Hive primarily helped the council:

*...having a lovely big new academic library [without the public integration] would have been nice...but I don’t think we could have ever got that in the current climate...I feel like the university was useful for...having The Hive as it is and not having to close other [public] libraries (Susan, ALL, Interview)*

As I said in the methodology chapter, it is not my aim to present a judgment or reveal a “true story” here, as hard as that felt at times to resist. The antagonisms I detected between some staff and the management line about The Hive also did not mean that those staff did not also support and admire the project. What I think is important here about the disparities of opinion is what they tell us about how public and academic roles and worths are felt. While the management view of principles and ethics might seem oppositional to the academic librarian who told me “it doesn’t really work, because the two things don’t mix, the public library doesn’t mix” or the one mentioned above who would have preferred a solely university one, they share some central agreements. Both seem to place the university on the side of sacrifice or generosity, and the public as lucky. But thinking about this assessment in conjunction with the terms of the PFI, with the council contributing 70% to the university’s 30%, made these assessments feel somewhat unfair.

A further key element of the way in which The Hive is conceptualised among non-managerial staff members regards what I’ve seen as a “saved narrative”. In contrast to the idea that a small number of ethically motivated individuals spearheaded what was a good idea, several members of staff preferred to refer to elements of the project that they saw as the key thing



which had saved it from failure. This suggested to me that they did not truly back the project in itself or as an idea, but instead think it *just about* works, thanks to the one or two things that could be seen as strokes of luck. For some it is the fact that students of the University of Worcester are still able to use their own study space back on the main campus, away from The Hive. Holly, former front-of-house worker in the old Library says: “I think really the thing that has saved it, is, not only do we have a lot more eBooks now – so they can access a lot of things online – but also...they turned what was the old university library into a study centre, so that’s full of PCs and it’s open long hours, so if they want peace and quiet they can go there” (Holly, CSA, Interview). Similarly, the librarian quoted earlier as saying the public and the university “don’t mix” followed the statement by saying, “it’s the staff that make it work”. The lack of conflict resulting from the growing disparities between council and university contracts is explained by a further member of staff as being because “everyone is so nice”. This is a brief discussion of staff views and their difference with the official narrative of integration preferred by management, and I will discuss it more in relation to narratives of professionalisation in the following chapter. It seems key, though, that both the staff who suggest the university compromised to get The Hive, and managers who sense only positives about The Hive, share a fundamental feeling that the university and the public library are not wholly compatible: it is either pragmatism, or charity, but the classification of difference is maintained.

### Defining community

Having initially illustrated how the creation of somewhat shallow mission statements intersect with the effect of a vulnerable convergence of difference and conflict in the partnership inherent to The Hive, I now turn in more detail to the terms of community and integration favoured by the joint project.

The five-year Strategic Plan for the University of Worcester (2013) underlines The Hive’s role in promoting the university’s “reputation as an inclusive, open and accessible university” (p. 18), and refers to its positive impact on what they call the “community” and on “wider society”. The library itself is defined as “Britain’s first fully integrated university and public library” (p. 8). As such, three social units of population are referred to in the same document - community, society, and public - but none are really elaborated on. Elsewhere, “audiences” and “stakeholders” are used (Allen, Downes and Keene, 2018). As has been argued by Hannah Jones in the context of Local Government, the popularity of such concepts is in part because of their ambiguity; terms like ‘community’ can mean anything and nothing and can be

interpreted differently by different actors at different times (2015, p. 12). The vagueness works to include anyone who needs including at the time, and to almost paradoxically promote a feeling of belonging – which has at least a slight suggestion of exclusiveness - while also seeming open and welcoming. Such concepts work silently to label and exclude those who fall outside them. “Community talk” (Back, 2009, p. 207) is useful for a project like The Hive seeking to present a convivial public space, and a vision for the future.

Without defining ‘community’, the University authors can also remain ambiguous about how far the university is part of it. Considering the unpublicised inequality between the partners’ contributions, this ambiguity felt conspicuous. This language allows it to be unclear whether the University is a kind of benevolent outsider, positively impacting on those who are not members of the University and drawing some of them in, while not being on an equal footing as them. In a recent article written by three senior members of staff about The Hive as it approached its fifth birthday, I noticed a mixture of attachments to the term community which had subtly shifting positions on which people belonged where. Most frequently, “community” was used to describe everyone who did not engage with The Hive as a university member, as in “the wider community”. But at other points they spoke of “communities”, implying further variations within the non-university-going-public. Directly relating to the strategic positioning of The Hive and the aims of management, the authors write that:

*there was an aspiration to attract new audiences and to offer fully accessible learning opportunities to both University members and the wider community, including, importantly, those who would otherwise have felt excluded from university environments. (Allen, Downes and Keene, 2018, p. 184)*

This hints at some of the complexity of The Hive as an integration project in terms of people, aims, and outcomes. Though definitely laudable and passionate in its principle, classification/convergence is at play here in a way that inadvertently diminishes the notion of a truly inclusive library body.

## Integration

The second term that is key to the official imagination of The Hive at an institutional level is “integration”. Connecting to the discussion of “community” above, integration is pertinent because of the way it frames people into groups and allows claims to be made about their belonging. There are many ways to understand the term, and the following trail around its

usage in The Hive project is not intended to tease out the “true” intention of management but rather to explore meanings in relation to how I experienced the space throughout my ethnography.

Integration is one of The Hive’s “core values” included above. Integration has been a governmental buzzword for several decades and echoes public policy in the UK and beyond regarding the process by which communities of perceived cultural difference are encouraged to live together. However, associations with the term can be read negatively – it is associated with ‘assimilation’, forced accommodation on the part of the minority to the lifestyle of the majority (Hudson, 2017, p. 13). The notion of “integration” translates across both the idea behind The Hive and also its internal features: Linda (a manager) repeats the term throughout our interview to talk about the “integrated library”, its “integrated staff” and their “integrated shelves”. The symbolism of the term “integrated” echoes the overall mission statements of inclusivity and community, demonstrated clearly here with Linda saying:

*“we had such a clear idea of what we wanted to achieve, which was basically everything we could... would be integrated; everything that was possible would be available to all communities using The Hive” (Linda, Manager, Interview).*

Integration also suggests a wholeness and a natural belonging between its parts. Integration can go further than “partnership” in terms of conjuring imagery of mixing and belonging, rather than just working together. The Hive staff writing the academic article explain the balance between respecting a kind of individuality and difference between the university and the council while proudly working together: “Each service (County and University) has its own strategic priorities but The Hive has a set of operational guidelines and customer service standards which are delivered and adhered to by all staff in the building including the facilities management team and Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service” (Allen, Downes and Keene, 2018, p. 185; Hive, 2019).

Part of the institutional appeal of “integration” for The Hive as a project is also its claim to uniqueness, and The Hive’s official documentation stresses this uniqueness compared with other “joint” projects. The Forum in Southend is a project combining three libraries – The University of Essex, South Essex College, and South-end-on-sea borough council, but because they chose not to integrate the library collections, but only share a building, it is less

ambitious in terms of integration than The Hive. For The Hive, integrating the physical stock, classification scheme, and space of the library leads to the claim that it has “re-imagine[d]” the role of the library in the twenty-first century as the core information provider to the community” (Dalton, Elkin and Hannaford, 2006, p. 536). Integrated sounds cohesive – practically and philosophically - where joint-use sounds mechanical and pragmatic. Integrated is a statement of intent and an ongoing process: it suggests a natural comfort between the involved parties and a lack of conflict.

However, taking this into consideration with both the divergent views around The Hive’s foundation, and the ambiguity of the appeals to community, I began to feel that this emphasis on integration rested on the unspoken understanding that the components to be integrated were in some way different, and that in converging them, those differences were almost made all the stronger. Although a positive and worthy approach, the notion of integration nonetheless rested, it seemed to me, on a prior acceptance of division and difference, and this line of implicit thinking became more evident to me through my ethnography, as I witnessed subtle but powerful examples of this notion of difference come into play. How these implicit differences manifest over time and under pressure into differential treatment is the focus of the second section of this chapter.

### **Temporalities of The Hive: a bomb waiting to go off**

The foregoing discussions - of the constituent parts of The Hive, the language used to recreate it, and then the way it is interacted with by staff – show a level of disconnection. As the quotation at the beginning of the chapter, written by key strategic actors in The Hive and published in the academic journal *Library Trends*, made clear in saying “there is no concept of an “academic” or “public” area within the same building”, the outward communication of The Hive is built on collapsing categories and building an impression of wholeness through integration. However, this partnership is predicated on vulnerable accommodations managed through classification and convergence. This second section of the chapter looks at the idea that this structural vulnerability has practical consequences which evolve as the project does.

This second section asks how these slippery integrations are communicated and play out in the live space of The Hive through differential treatment and uncomfortable accommodations. Here I am looking at things like differential contracts of county and university employed staff, the website and library catalogue(s), the different borrowing rights.

I explore how these divergences are conceived of with regard to a future where council budgets are reducing every year as shown in the budget books (Worcestershire County Council, 2015a, 2016; 2018), while the PFI and 70:30 ratio remain unmoving. In practical terms, I look at the role of the “student voice” and the value of their perceptions of the public. In the final section, I illustrate the increasingly challenging position of The Hive as it intersects with the rest of the public service landscape.

### Divergent contracts and future planning

One of the most striking features of The Hive at an institutional level is a tension around its foundational story and its future. There is a contradiction inherent to The Hive being an institution that is simultaneously conceived of as “completed” – it’s an integrated library, it opened in 2012, job done – and the reality that its core features are vulnerable to the changing nature and challenges of its constituent parts. This state seems to keep The Hive in an ambiguous and contradictory place: it is at once bound by a rigid contract and a huge material building – without, as one member of staff put it to me “any Plan B” – while also being pushed and pulled by the budgetary shifts of a council under austerity, and an increasingly individualised and marketized HE landscape. This dual reality is inherently antagonistic and will affect The Hive and its publics both culturally and practically. What I found in discussing this with staff were varying relationships with past-present-future conceptions of The Hive. This opening section turns to this anxious futurity feature through an exploration of management attitudes towards the different fears and futures of the Council vis-a-vis the University as they affect staffing and stock.

Worcestershire County Council has been facing cuts to its library budget since The Hive opened (Worcestershire County Council, 2015b). This has affected both their capacity to recruit staff, and to maintain book stock replenishment. A member of staff employed by the County Council tells me of the shrinking of their book buying budget with a palpable feeling of uncertainty and helplessness:

*there are in-year cuts to be made, it might be that we expect to have a certain budget for the year but then part way through the year that gets reduced, so yeah, we kind of just have to roll with it, unfortunately. (Claire, Manager, Interview)*

Beyond the details, there is a sense of the public library crisis being such common knowledge that it barely needs explaining, indicative of the idea of “persisting” and everyday austerity

(Hitchen, 2019). Claire talks to me about “the state of local government”, with it implicit that we all knew exactly what was meant. Linda, another manager at The Hive tells me that she is “sure the council wouldn't be looking at investing in something like this now, *given their situation*” (Linda, Manager, Interview).

What is even more troubling, though perhaps not wholly surprising, is the fact that this scenario has not truly been planned for. A further member of the academic team said, “we opened before the local authorities started to really feel the effects of austerity, so it didn't feel as big a risk” (Susan, ALL, Interview). In detailing the state of the county's capacity to buy books, Claire says there could be a future where the council has zero budget, and no agreement in place within The Hive's partnership as to what would happen next. She asks hypothetically:

*what if there's no budget for county? I think that's unlikely, but you know...given [what's happened already] who knows how far away that might be? I'm not saying that it is about to happen, but obviously potentially in the future, five years, I don't know, we don't know what that landscape holds for us. (Claire, Manager, Interview)*

Claire states later on in the interview that there was only ever a “sort of gentleman's agreement that, well, ‘you fund your own stock and we fund our own stock’” between the University and the Council. Although it might have been difficult to predict the scale of cuts facing public services when The Hive was conceived, it seems astonishing that the state of the “gentleman's agreement” still has not been revisited formally, and seems illustrative of a certain superficiality to The Hive's integration; it feels difficult to detect a formal solidarity between the two partners when one is at risk of slipping under, barely noticed. There is a sense in which things seemed to “work” when held statically, back in the years leading up to the library's opening, but that as time passes its vulnerability is revealing of assumptions made and dangers overlooked.

In addition to the book stock, the staffing structure of The Hive is similarly an area where – as one manager put it – there is a “bomb waiting to go off”. As I explained in the introduction, the university and the county council have different terms and conditions for their employees, and this has been carried into The Hive so that someone employed by the council with the same job role as someone employed by the university will have different contracts. Holly explained it to me like this:

*I mean the university contract was actually very different to the county contract. For example, the county people would get paid double on a Sunday, and the university people didn't, but then the university people get paid when they go off sick whereas the county council staff don't. (Holly, CSA, Interview)*

Elsewhere I learn that this is indeed the case, but that initially perceived disparities in pay scales and contracts were “offset” in a mapping exercise before The Hive opened. However, as with the book stock scenario, The Hive is now in a position where the disparities are revealing themselves again in ways that were not planned for, and there is little wiggle room. As with the PFI contract, there is a rigidity to the pay structures at odds with the evolving constraints facing both organisations. Claire, again, is the one who puts this to me most starkly, saying:

*we can't deviate from the system, you know, the pay scales, and points within the scale...they exist, and there's really no way of deviating from that, cos that's the way the organisations work*  
(Claire, Manager, Interview)

As with her explanation of book stock, I hear a mixture of desperation and resignation in what Claire says here. Saying “they exist”, in reference to the discrete and bounded rules of the parts of The Hive almost seems an expression of disappointment: just as the vision of The Hive exists, so too do almost insurmountable complications.

In addition to the bald facts of the challenges facing The Hive, what I want to highlight in concluding this opening section is what the attitudes of those I spoke to revealed about their conception of The Hive and how this fits in with the classificatory practices I highlight in the section that follows. Although clearly there are members of staff who had foresight of the environmental factors affecting the integration, there seemed a sense among many that The Hive was completed when it opened in 2012, and that integration is now – as a manager put it – “business as usual”. The idea that “there is no plan B” is a statement of confidence, but in hindsight perhaps reveals the extent to which the language and performance of integration was an effort in converging differences that were ultimately unavoidable. It isn't my place to suggest what could have been done differently – if anything - but the ongoing-ness of cuts and confusion around contracts seem indicative of a project whose vision has struggled with a desire to create something that the rigidity of its structures will find impossible to allow. In the section that follows I talk about further areas where changing circumstances have

precipitated classificatory practices as The Hive evolves.

### Student Voice, Hive reaction

The convergence of the public and academic interests in The Hive has developed at the same time as student fees have risen and competition between universities has intensified thanks to mechanisms like the National Student Survey (NSS) (Thiel, 2019). As I explored in both the literature review and the methodology chapters, this has led to subjectivity shifts within the student body. Nixon et al provide an uncomfortable account of the student-consumer relation beyond what they characterise as the dominant trend in HE sociologies of “a hegemonic discourse based on economic rationality and conceptions of value” (2018, p. 938). Instead, they develop vocabularies for student subjectivities based on psychological concepts like “narcissism”, “infantile anxieties” and the “fantasies of self-sufficiency” developed through interview data. One of the things that made me wince a bit reading this article, despite its authors having sympathy for the students labelled narcissists, was the disparity between assessing the students’ sometimes deeply unappealing views on what the university should “do for them” and any deep reflection on the subjectivities’ of academics or universities. As I discussed in the methodology, I found dwelling and reflecting over time a satisfying way to rethink the complexities of the student experience, and the section that follows seeks to do that again in its discussion of student and Hive interaction.

In contrast perhaps with Nixon et al’s piece, by looking at the role of “student voice” in The Hive, I explore The Hive’s reactions and practical efforts to mould The Hive’s experience in ways that protect their separateness (specialness?) in relation to the non-university going public. I will explore in chapter six how I engaged with the articulated collapsing of the concepts of public and academic in space at an affective level. However, it is pertinent to the institutional focus of this current chapter to discuss how, in response to outside pressures, partners within The Hive have shaped the way the project can be interacted with according to what institutional affiliation you have. Since the financial burden of the PFI contract is heavily weighted towards the county council (70/30) - although this fact is not widely publicised - the ways that differential access is granted becomes even more stark. In this sense then, the role of voice and classification underline the ambiguity that exists in the equality of the partnership.

### What do they know?

Student feedback is incredibly important to The Hive, and the reaction of students to the



project is cited very frequently in my interviews with staff. This fits within a HE context of hyper auditing and student fees, and the increasing logic of student as consumer (Kavanagh, 2009). Surveys and feedback form an everyday reality for university students, with consequences which contribute to the league tables upon which universities now rely for attracting fee paying students.

The students of the University of Worcester on the whole like The Hive; the approval ratings have gone up according to staff, and the staff's experience of student complaints against the public have dropped off in the last few years. Since the building is now six years old, the reason I am often given is that when it opened The Hive was used by students who had known a different and exclusive library, which was in the main campus, fifteen minutes' walk away. As such, they had to change habits to come to the new library, and upon reaching it, disliked having to share it. Now, several cohorts have gone through the university only having known The Hive. This simple point of normalisation appears to have helped considerably.

There are still significant resentments, however. Prior to The Hive, it was – I am told in four different interviews – the sports science students who were complained about for being loud and disruptive. Now it is the public. Jane explains it this way:

*my experience is that students...and this is a very broad brushstroke, but students like to have a group that they can externalise problems onto. And here it's the public. When we used to have the old library at Peirson, I wasn't here then, but apparently then it was the Sports students.*  
(Jane, Manager, Interview)

I speak to a nursing student in an ethnographic interview on the main campus (not at The Hive) and he says he resents "paying for people on the dole" to use The Hive. This same person didn't use The Hive himself but relayed several stories about people "hogging computers to go on Facebook" while students tried to work. He was glad that at least the top floor of The Hive is designated "student only" (it isn't). It's difficult to avoid the conclusion that there is a snobbishness or class complexion to this, which I will discuss more in chapter six.

An entry on [whatdotheyknow.com](http://whatdotheyknow.com), a website which publishes freedom of information requests, is a further illustration of the continuing issue of resentment and distrust felt by

some students about having to share The Hive. In this, a student in 2012 – the year the building opened – sent a detailed request for information about the financial constitution of The Hive. They ask for information including: “University's financial contribution to the construction of The Hive, the yearly on-going cost to the University of The Hive, the duration of the University's ongoing obligation to fund The Hive, the identity of the organisation that currently owns the majority of the collection of books and journals that were previously in Peirson Library”.

After making his requests, the student adds a lengthy comment on the website (appendix 4), explaining the rationale for his enquiry. He intends to “petition to the council to make improvements to The Hive for the benefit of students” but intends “to ensure that this petition asks for things that could actually be delivered without breaking contracts or incurring unreasonable financial costs”.

He continues: “Knowing how The Hive project was structured financially would reveal how much political clout the university could theoretically bring to bear on the council, and what students might reasonably ask for”. Interestingly, he concludes that he has approached the university “as you will also hold similar documents, and might be able to reveal them” but has used a FOI request “in order to protect the university in the event of the council objecting to you providing me with this information; the university can simply respond that you were legally obliged under FOI to give me the information.”

Clearly it would be inappropriate to portray this student's concerns as solely resulting from the public perception presented by The Hive, yet it perhaps offers us an exaggerated snapshot of what many students appear to feel – that the university, and therefore they themselves have been hard done by, forced into offering their resources to an undeserving public. This student seems concerned to “help” the university, he seems to trust it, but he feels they messed up by allowing themselves to be used by an “objecting” Council. In response to his request, the University replies with an honest breakdown of the PFI and an assurance that university books have not been “given” to the council. However, the University respondents do not include the fact that it is the Council who bears the greater financial cost of The Hive, rather than the University. This, in combination with the “community” publicity and “visionary leadership” narrative discussed at the beginning of this chapter seem to suggest that the university is ambivalent at best with the misapprehension that it is the University

being generous and charitable to the council.

From interviews with staff, exchanges with students, and observations of space sharing in the building, it seems as though the complaint is neither the norm, nor the anomaly. Many students share his views in a less extreme way, and Hive staff appear painfully aware of the need to navigate these negative feelings. There is a temporality with this, and people tend to believe the poor feedback originally received by the university through the NSS has dissipated. Linda says:

*we do get students sometimes saying, less and less now, but certainly at the beginning, 'the public are borrowing all our books, the books aren't on the shelves therefore the public must have them' and, usually, we were able to look at the actual statistics, and go back and say look, it, actually, that's not true, that's a false impression you've got, but heh, if we haven't got them in stock let's talk about that, and how we can improve the stock for you rather than just blaming the public basically. (Linda, Manager, Interview)*

These complaints seem to focus on resources, or on activities, and both illustrate that some students resent the presence of the public:

*through feedback from the NSS we still get comments that say, there were not enough computers, the public are using them all to play Candy Crush Saga, and the interesting thing about that is, that's one of those things that's not true, it's absolutely not true. I mean, the public are playing Candy Crush Saga, but so are students. But also, there is absolutely no occasion when all of the computers are in use. in fact, only 45% of them are in use, broadly speaking, so there's huge numbers of computers that are available, it's completely a perception thing. (Claire, Manager, Interview)*

As with the comment about “people on the dole hogging computers”, these two quotations illustrate how some university students “blame” the public in a way that is indicative of divergent understandings of worth. In these staff’s explanations there is a desire to be fair, to listen to issues and respect students, but to ground any reaction in evidence. In the main, feedback and complaints about the public seem to betray a judgment being made about what activity is appropriate and worthy in a library, in conjunction with a judgment about who can

and cannot do that activity. I discuss these lines of public/private behaviours in themselves more in chapter six, but here I remain interested in how the university students express them, and how Hive staff respond to them.

With the case of history resources, it is true that there is significant “cross borrowing”, with members of the public accessing university books. This should surely be seen as one of The Hive’s greatest successes. While other complaints might be dealt with through education – telling students that it is not the case that their books are being taken by the public - in this case, adjustments were made by The Hive to satisfy student concern. Nancy, an ALL, says

*One instance where we found it was true to an extent was in history, which, you know, lots of people are interested in, and so we did go back and say you're right, it is being disproportionately borrowed, and we agreed with the students that we'd get more e-books”*  
(Nancy, ALL, Interview).

I will now illustrate the way the management of The Hive deals with these complaints, and refer to the central themes of classificatory practices regarding two things: firstly that student complaints are generally not founded in fact but suggest a feeling of superior worth to the public, and secondly how the management try to negotiate this.

### Student voice in practice

In this section I explore how the integration plays out practically and begin with several examples whereby the non-university-going-public are denied access to aspects of The Hive, and their worth is tacitly downgraded. These include the website, access to e-resources, and access to physical “high demand” books. After this, I will talk about the shallow power afforded to students through the NSS. I associate shallow power in this instance with consumer power and audit obligation.

The website for The Hive is a key area in which institutional affiliation provides differential access. Here, there are different virtual spaces with differential privileges for the university and non-university going library users. The main Hive website gives the impression of unity in that it displays both partner logos and is adorned with rotating photographs of the building. The Hive as a whole entity made up entirely by the Council and the University of Worcester is the impression given. The standalone PCs in the physical space of the third floor of The Hive, where the main library collection is, also display this screen. As such, any library user

within the building does not have to state as they approach the catalogue who they are, what their affiliation is, which side of the partnership they fall into. On entering the library catalogue search the following message is given: “while this search is available to all, if you are a University of Worcester student, you should log in to as usual to ensure access to your full range of educational resources”. As such, although the search is “available to all”, there is a nod to a further one that is selective for those with different credentials.

The scholarly communications landscape is incredibly profitable and privatised. Mars and Medak (2019, p. 347) have described how academic publishing “oligarchs” Elsevier have a 37% profit margin that comes “as a result of a business model premised on harvesting and enclosing the scholarly writing, peer reviewing and editing which is done mostly for free by academics”. As a result, so-called “shadow libraries” like Science Hub are one of the few ways for people without the right university affiliations to access pay-walled e-resources. It is incredibly difficult for people who do not have the credentials granted by an academic institution to access academic research electronically. To me, this represents a significant moment in the broader restructuring of universities from (semi)public institutions to mostly private ones. An apparently technical development (as opposed to political) – the digitisation of research journals – has stealthily led to the removal of academic knowledge from public access. In the past, anyone could get access to a university library and browse physical journal holdings. Now, it is not only quite a challenge to get access to the library in many cases, it is also almost impossible to get access to electronic resources.

This is not a situation of The Hive or the University of Worcester’s making, and in collaborating with the Council they are opening physical if not virtual doors to academic knowledge in ways no other British University is. Linda explains the unavoidable necessity of keeping certain electronic resources obtainable only by students of the University:

*eBooks we can't [make accessible to the public], we can't, eJournals we can to an extent open up to the public, eBooks almost never, the licences just don't allow it. (Linda, Manager, Interview).*

I want to explore how concealment and invisibility combines with classificatory practices and is deployed by Hive practitioners according to student pressure. Following the above explanation, Linda goes on to reveal a reason behind splitting up the catalogue results between public and academic users that rests more heavily on perception management and

differential worths:

*So the public don't know anything about them, they don't see them, they're  
not visible on the catalogue to them, so that is a completely ringfenced area  
for students"*  
(Linda, Manager, Interview)

I think what is most interesting in this instance is the two publics – university going and not – are seen as in conflict to the point that making one set of resources totally invisible is seen as useful.

This use of visibility and invisibility intersects with a perception of worth, and a perception of the relative volume and value of the non-student “voice”. As was implicit in Linda’s telling reference to making things that are not equally offered invisible, consideration has clearly been taken about what message of entitlement is given to each of the communities using the integrated collection. The idea of a “ringfenced area” seems pertinent for the message it sends to the university part of the integration as much as any “reality” of the need.

In the following section I move from the virtual to the physical and introduce the method by which the University further communicates a classification in the face of its prior convergence. The “blue stickers” become a bit of a motif for me in this thesis, and speak again to the blurred lines of need, worth, and voice.

### **Blue stickers and the meaning of High Demand**

On The Hive’s shelves, large blue stickers are attached to stock which appears on the University’s reading list system. The stickers say the book is a “High Demand” item, which carries the significance that it is no longer available to members of the non-university-going public in the same way as books without the stickers are. The public may only borrow one “High Demand” book at a time in contrast to the University students who get eight at a time. All University books are now assigned blue stickers as a matter of course, because the library only buys books that are added to the electronic Reading List system by academic staff. The stickers are large and take up much of the spine, so immediately give the impression of who is and who is not able to access the item, often at the expense of the book cover and title.

The inequity produced by this system seems due to a lack of foresight rather than a deliberate desire to grow the “High Demand” allocation to such a degree that the notion presented of integration between the two sets of collections becomes redundant. The University’s book buying policy now combines these facts that make inequity unavoidable: their own

tight(ening) budget means that only books for reading lists are bought, all books on reading lists are automatically classed “high demand”, all high demand books are blue stickered, blue stickers are not easy to take off, and no procedure is in place for them to be eventually removed. Although the actual usage statistics of university bought books would be easy to find – and these circulation figures are studied and cited for some particular areas as I will discuss below – there is an interesting mismatch between technology, practicality and perhaps, I argue, a desire to placate students, which, at the moment, seems to be preventing those blue stickers being removed when they are not, or are no longer, “High Demand.” Claire is aware of the problem that was created when an electronic system (the reading lists) was met with physical solutions and expresses frustration with the challenge facing them:

*anything that is on a reading list will get stickered up...now, we've reached a point where, and I have raised this a few times, where I've said, actually not all of this will [remain] on a reading list necessarily, so do we need to reassess this, because otherwise over time all the university books will be blue stickered, and that doesn't reflect the reality because they're not necessarily high demand or on a reading list (Claire, Manager, Interview).*

At the same time, as I mentioned above with regard to staffing contracts, the public library budget is under constant threat of further cuts, so the development of blue stickers comes in relationship to a decline in the number of council books being bought.

Reactions by staff to the blue sticker book policy and its validation as a response to the NSS student survey are not uniform. All the liaison librarians appear relatively relaxed about it, even whilst acknowledging that the rationale behind the scheme is not wholly empirically based. There is clearly some discomfort felt by Claire in explaining the procedure. Two of the managers interviewed reveal that there are concerns about the repercussions of this policy in the future. Linda states emphatically that “we will need to review it”. Claire goes much further in vocalising that she has long had concerns about any repercussions they may have to face in the future. This concern comes not only in terms of the policy for its own sake - the blue stickers are a physical and material response to a digital process: they can't be pulled off as easily as a book can be removed from High Demand on a digital reading list.

As such, the blue stickers intersect with an asymmetry between the partners, and the way The Hive deal with it seems to give preference to a desire to please students, without – so far

– addressing the impact this has on the central aim of The Hive to collapse classification of “public” and “academic”. Calling books on a reading list “High Demand” is noteworthy. The language is urgent and unequivocal; “High Demand” feels like a classification of the higher worth of those using it. Demand is used here as a word about frequency of need, but it is also a verb – to demand – which coincidentally reflects how the sticker came about in the first place. The legitimization for this action is clearly as much related to the preservation of a sense of difference – of classification – between the communities as it is to do with empirical evidence that the items are truly high demand.

I get a bit obsessed by the blue stickers and stare at them from my seat in the library. They are a potent emblem of the complex and accidental antagonism of The Hive. They are key – to me – to the complexion of The Hive always having a grounding in integration that is slipping and shaky, an orientation to a future that is just out of reach. The project is caught in a complex of voices all crying their worth – with some louder than others - and a complex of financial pressures. I will return to the blue stickers in the sixth chapter to discuss them in terms of the aesthetics of the library shelf and how it affects the materiality of the space. In a sense they show us that these areas are sites of conflict at every medium and at every level, that even the good intentions of the integration project of The Hive are vulnerable to becoming reinforcers of classification between the non-university and university going members of the public. This, along with the invisibility of the electronic resources that members of the public cannot see, seems to perpetuate an expectation that the publics for whom the library is for are fundamentally ill matched.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have attended to two main concerns. Firstly, I described the foundational structures and stories of The Hive and talked about how they have been engaged with through mission statements and the keywords of integration and community. Here, I described how a presentation of equal partnership and relative silence around the PFI felt like an ambiguity about what the project is. I argue that simply stating that the library did away with concepts of public and academic did not result in an equal balance, and that there are signs of an antagonism towards the Council and the non-university going public. For some, it felt fundamentally that The Hive is an integration between different things: institutions, publics, voices. The integration project is ongoing, rather than complete, and is vulnerable to changes in the outside context, while simultaneously being held in rigid parameters like the PFI contract.



In the second section I explored the processes of integration and negotiation as they were approached institutionally by those at The Hive. Here, I looked particularly at the role of visibility and invisibility in managing the divergent sense of worth between people, knowledges, and spaces. I showed how this has shifted with time, as the relative strength of student voice and struggling budgets of the council seemed to pull in opposite directions.

I have sought to illustrate how instrumental features of The Hive are in feedback with conceptions and appeals to classifications of people, and that these are not fixed. While features of the project have rigidity, the landscape within which they sit do not, and this has the effect of giving the project something of an always-just-out-of-reach promise. Intractable questions around the PFI vis-a-vis the declining budgets, the council book stock, and the potential for growing disparities between staff contracts reveal the vulnerability of the project's original promise. As the public service and university landscape within which The Hive sits continues to change, appeals to classifications of people and knowledges reveal themselves to be aligned to perceptions of relative worth, which ultimately seem to reclassify the notion of "academic" and "public" and thereby maintain a clear distinction between the two.

Although this is a circumstance heightened by the unusual institutional proximity of the council and university services contained at The Hive, the ambiguities and vulnerabilities herein speak to broader issues. I hope to have made clear that the situation at The Hive is not primarily formed by their unique handling of it. Rather, The Hive is reacting to a shared context of merged services, public services under austerity, and a HE system that has been transformed through individualised student debt and diminished central government funding. The shifting definitions of many of the project's parts (public, academic, integration, and so on) illustrate the evolving nature of public life in Britain today, and speak to the challenges faced by those desiring inclusive and truly public education institutions.

Having attended to The Hive and its integration project at the level of its institutional makeup, the following chapter turns to its professional structures and what these tell us.

## Chapter 5 - Professional structures and structuring: managing integration through divergent staffing

### Vignette: Staff in space

*Black clothing becomes a shorthand for The Hive integration project, its intention and its contradictions. For those using the building, the presence of all black attired people makes their being identified as sources of help easier - I'm asked to help at the printer area once on a day I also inadvertently wore black. Beyond its practical purpose, black clothing seems to me to represent seamless integration, dynamic team building, Hive family-ness and the rejection of opposing sides. It even goes some way in making the security staff – who we expect to see in black – seem a little less conspicuous. Staff members refer to the clothing often in interviews as an easy-to-grasp illustration of how seamless the two communities of academic and public's convergence are: we're all dressed in black = we're all the same = the integration works. It is important that Hive workers are given the choice to wear their own black clothes or wear a "Hive" branded uniform, giving them professional autonomy if they want it.*

*The curated impression of uniformity between and among staff through black clothing is also a symbol that falters. Rather than straightforwardly successful, the black clothing becomes an emblem of key fault lines in the project, the very opposite of what it was hoped to conceal. In the attempt to deny differences between staff paid for by the county council or by the university, divisions based on front-of-house or back-office, black clothing or not-black-clothing, emerge instead. For example, James, a former student at the University of Worcester, now has two part time jobs at The Hive, one employed by each partner. The clothes he wears on different days are integral to the shift in functions: "well actually I've got two roles, I work in the back office for the university...and the other role is basically library customer service. So I'm one of the guys wearing black with the gold lanyard, and helping customers" (James, CSA, Interview). Jane, a manager, makes it clear*

*to me that because she is a “back of house” manager she is not required to wear black. (Reflection)*

## **Introduction and structure of chapter**

In this chapter I turn to the way the ongoing and day to day integration project of The Hive discussed in the previous chapter is constructed by work. This structuring of work is both long-term and more immediate: I look at both the divergent professional structures that are enmeshed in the running of The Hive and how re/structuring happens in live negotiation on the library floor. The primary groups I am interested in here are the Academic Liaison Librarians (ALL) who might be said to represent the traditional professional trajectory of librarianship as it stands today, and their interface with the non-professional “customer service assistants” (CSA) who are the more visible face of work at The Hive.

I begin the chapter with a discussion of the two groups referred to, with reference to the literature through which I explore the work of The Hive. I then discuss the ways different groups of staff approach their role in The Hive. The substantive section of the chapter then turns to focus on the self-articulated role of ALLs, who constitute an important part of The Hive project’s partnership as university-employed professional librarians. I end the chapter with a shorter exploration of the customer-service-assistants (CSA), who, I argue, experience a different process of professionalisation to the ALLs.

## **Background to Academic Liaison Librarians and the “pincer movement” of library work**

Exploring the roles and practices of the ALL as individuals and as a service is pertinent to the overall project of the integrated library both in terms of the work they do and in the way this work relates to the other parties within the project. As I explore below, the linguistic and affective structuring of occupational identity between the ALL and the Customer Service Assistants affects the way the Hive functions overall. As Massey has argued (2013), “the language we use has effects in moulding identities and characterising social relationships” (p. 3). In this sense, narratives of professionalisation with academic librarianship in the face of technological and managerial culture shifts change the parameters of what it is to be a librarian, what it is to be doing academic work, what the functions of different types of library are, and how natural and successful The Hive integration project is.

Drawing on the interviews and interactions I had with the ALL team and management I explore the uneasy evolution of professionalisation of librarianship and the ways the academic library staff relate to changes in their profession. My engagement here is driven

primarily in relationship to the ideas of Bowker and Leigh Star and particularly their interrelated concepts of “deleted labour” and the “pincer movement” of managerialism and technology, and I will discuss these concepts before moving on. Bowker and Leigh Star call the dual developments of “new management philosophies and new information technologies” a “pincer movement” (Bowker and Leigh Star, 1999, p. 239) suggesting an interrelation of distinct processes which result in a narrowing of labour. Librarianship as a discipline and a profession concerned with organising, giving access to, and communicating information has been particularly strongly affected by the effect of the internet’s development and work automation coinciding with trends in New Public Management. NPM has been discussed in the literature review as a pervasive philosophy that has affected LIS and which encourages a turn away from the idea of professionalism as a community of knowledge, and towards generic managerialism as an end in itself. The linguistic movement from Librarianship or Library Studies to Library and *Information* Studies/Science as the common description of the academic research discipline associated with libraries is indicative of the effects of the “new information technologies” side of the pincer movement.

Part of what is important about this pincer movement, and most pertinent to the development of librarianship as a profession, is the silence with which this pincer has moved, its interrelation with Bowker and Leigh Star’s other concept, “deleted labour”, and the ways this all transforms the occupational identities of those doing library work. Deleted labour is summarised by Leigh Star’s colleague Stefan Timmerman as “the work behind the work...the countless taken-for-granted and often dismissed practices of assistants, technicians, and students” (Timmermans, 2016, p. 2). In the context of this chapter, this work relates to those processes which the pincer movement of managerialism and new technologies has swept away from the remit of the librarian and into lesser recognised places: the outsourcing companies who now manage library logistics, the centralised teams who do bulk cataloguing, “the customer service assistants” who do the interpersonal, directional and much of the emotional work. Following and recovering these processes is essential to The Hive in order that a rich picture of public professions in proximity be presented. As Pettinger (2019, p. 49) says, “when work practices are forgotten, ignored, excluded, not seen or denied, then any account of the ethical and political issues in doing work is restricted”. Thus, this first section of the chapter looks to the librarian’s own sense of these work and status transformations, and how they manifest in the library itself.

The second section of the chapter turns to the experience of front-of-house library staff – the “customer service assistants”. Here, professionalisation plays out in a different but

interconnected way. These are teams of workers who, in contrast to the ALLs, are not caught in the formal profession of librarianship (as complicated and confused a body as I argue that is), but nevertheless work within a vocabulary of professional practice. This work is marked by expectations of professionalism that appeal more to emotional and personal character traits than bodies of shared knowledge. In terms borrowed from Sharon Bolton (2005, pp. 94–95), this customer service library work is managed more by “pecuniary emotion management” than “prescriptive emotion management”. Where the latter might better characterise the academic librarians whose emotional motivations for work involve both instrumental reasons and reasons related to the membership of a professional body, the former is likely to be more “commercial”, with expectations of politeness and friendly engagement directly related to the delivering of a job.

My understanding of the management of this front-of-house experience, which involves self-management and customer service assessments also follows Fournier’s work on the “disciplinary logic of professionalism” which, she argues, is “deployed to new organisational domains to profess ‘appropriate’ forms of conduct when employees’ behaviour cannot be regulated (at least so economically) through direct control” (1999, p. 290). In this sense, the work of the customer service assistants is more tightly managed than the ALLs but through diffuse organisational forms which privilege emotional labour, group management and “exceeding expectations” (Hive, 2019).

Overall, the chapter explores how transformations in one sphere of the library profession (Academic Liaison Librarianship) interfaces with NPM, a trend common throughout public service organisations. As was explored in the previous chapter, the delineations and classifications of types of staff and types of work at The Hive are variously understood and the lines and definitions shift according to who is talking, and when. As such, delineating between the library staff as being either “public” or “academic”, or, front-of-house or back-of-house was insufficient, since both divisions were mobilised at different times, and ebbed in importance at others. As I will discuss, both binaries mattered to The Hive in a very real way: public and academic staff have different contractual terms and conditions; front of house and back of house staff have different professional expectations placed on them. But as time went on and after having had more opportunity to talk and dwell with staff in The Hive space, it became apparent that these binaries were not as solid as the contracts or job descriptions that ultimately defined them, and that internal and external expressions of worth also shaped and reshaped roles.

One of the managers I interviewed, Claire, was keenly aware of the existence of preconceptions and continuing legacies that different styles of work at The Hive carried, and described the attitude she was working to discourage: “back of house” jobs are “more process focussed than customer focussed...[and they are often] somehow a bit revered, in the sense that you’re not standing on your feet all day, you’re a bit more ‘the manager of your own work’ (Claire, Manager, Interview). This statement is revealing of several things: firstly, the extent to which The Hive’s management is invested and engaged with making The Hive integration project mean – among its many other meanings - mutual respect and value among and between work styles. Secondly, it is interesting that she uses the term “process focussed” to describe back-of-house work, which gives a connotation slightly at odds with the follow up mention of being “manager of your own work”. Overall, as I will explore below, classifications of shifting flavours still permeate despite and because of these attitudes and material realities, and these affect the integration project’s success.

Integration, as we know, is The Hive’s watchword, but as I discussed in the previous chapter, it is also an incomplete and uncertain process, with different layers and levels: budgets, organisations, knowledges, futures. In the previous chapter I explored how even if members of staff felt The Hive integration ultimately “worked”, they had misgivings about how natural that success was. On the library floor and in staff members’ explanations, integration becomes a narrative for success, a success which – as I will explore here – can only be achieved if divergent and uncomfortable notions of worth – in this case at a professional level - are denied.

One Academic Liaison Librarian, Mark, tells me The Hive staffing integration is “absolutely seamless... there is no “them and us.” In naming the “them and us”, he reveals that it could nonetheless be found - between university and public, qualified and unqualified, front and back of house:

*“they are just Hive staff, the brand is The Hive, so you go in to The Hive and you don’t know who you are being served by, but you don’t care, it doesn’t matter who they are being employed by. But to them it probably does cos they will have different types of terms and conditions and slightly different things” (Mark, ALL, interview).*

Mark’s process of reasoning goes between superficial appearance (staff look the same, so are the same) to a recognition that whether there is a significant division among staff structures matters based on who is experiencing it (it “doesn’t matter” to the public using The Hive, but

it might to those who have different contracts). These movements of reasoning are key to the discrepancy between The Hive's publicised structure as a formal project between two equal partners, its financial structure as a 70:30 partnership with a private provider, (discussed in chapter four) and its everyday structuring, where varying access to professional identity and experience of the project day-to-day diverge.

Susan, another ALL, also makes it clear how important the narrative of The Hive is in terms of the integration of its staff for success. Unlike Mark however, she appears much less positive about the fact that part of her job is to perform a superficial unity with the other partners in the project, even to the extent that she resents the emotional labour (Hochschild, 2003) of positivity:

*You know, our role...we have to be very positive about what we say. We have to give a positive image of the library, we have to say positive things about what we're doing...how "we're all one team", how "it's a space for everyone" "we'll help anyone who comes to the desk". (Susan, ALL, Interview)*

The repetition of "we have to" makes clear the lack of agency she feels in this, regardless of the extent to which this is a genuine enforcement. Quoting buzz-phrases of integration also make clear the distance she feels from them.

Having given some background both to the aims and arguments of this chapter, I now turn in more detail to the case of the ALL.

## **Academic Liaison Librarian professional identity**

To begin this section, I present a detailed portrait of one ALL, Mark. After introducing him and giving a sense of some of the themes of library work he raises, I turn to a more formal introduction of the work of the ALL at The Hive.

Although in some ways he was quite atypical among the team of ALLs, Mark also encapsulates many themes pertinent to the rest of the academic team, The Hive as an academic library, and The Hive as an integration project. Mark joined the University of Worcester twenty years ago after leaving a trade job and returning to education, first as a mature student, and then gradually working and training to be a librarian. Given his embeddedness in the University, Mark has not only been present for the planning, implementing, and maintaining stages of The Hive project, but also has experienced broader changes within librarianship and society in general.

As such, Mark's perspective makes possible a reflection on the project over time, as an unfinished and constantly evolving business. There is a longer view and a perspective on change, acclimatisation, and accommodation. Gaining this longer-term reflection is useful not only in terms of content, but also in how it demonstrates how much The Hive project is built by these reflections – personal reactions to The Hive are felt as neutral but actually do the work of constructing and structuring the project's success on a daily basis.

### The case of Mark

*Mark arrived at the Colombian café where we'd arranged to meet for the interview early and grinning widely. Mark is in his early fifties and his all black smart clothing and small gold hoop earring, together with a smart laptop satchel gives him the air of punk who has grown up. Mark clearly follows the black clothes memo to the letter, and it added to his dad-punk persona. He plays the guitar and tells me he'll appear in a music video one of the university's Social Work lecturers has made called, "Boot out austerity blues", but insists that that's "outside of work". In work, he likes to "keep professional".*

*As a research participant Mark was the most engaged and willing to give up time to meet me. I got the impression before even meeting him that he liked to talk; another liaison librarian initially said she didn't have time to meet me but said she was "sure I'd get more than enough from Mark!". In the end, he and I met on several different occasions for interviews or to catch up, I observed several of the library skills and research workshops he delivers for students within his subject area. He was always very forthcoming and interested to talk when we bumped into each other on the library floor. Despite approaching interviews initially as fact-based and transactional, as though they were merely giving me neutral information about the library, it was clear by his email approaches and references back to things we had discussed in previous conversations, however, that – even if a little in spite of himself – he enjoyed the chance to reflect on his job and how it had changed.*  
*(Reflection)*

As a teacher of skills today associated with academic librarianship – "Information Literacy", "research skills" and "academic integrity" - Mark likes to play the role of "the insider" with students. He often teaches vocational students doing "top-up" degrees, or those students



doing degrees which are generally practice orientated. He takes these students to be essentially quite different to those doing more “traditional subjects” and felt they were not keen to engage in academia for its own sake:

*[take] a paramedic for example, very practical, seen to be very practical people - they come in [from the world of work] but there are certain [academic] standards they have got to do, they have to learn very quickly that in academia you have to do certain things and that's the sort of thing we try and get across, so you have got to, you know, [for example] write academically - you can't write just off the top of your head. (Mark, ALL, interview)*

Bringing to mind the theme of classification and boundary work, a lot is revealed about the positionality of expertise and knowledge between those within and those outside of the academy and how Mark views and responds to this as a librarian. With these vocational students, we see yet another kind of “public” being appealed to within the remit of The Hive. Despite, as I argued in the previous chapter, Hive staff and literature talking in terms of binaries (academic and public, university and community) there are delineations within “the student”, and this – the vocational student – marks a difference. As we saw with the “sports students” being blamed for noise and mess before the non-university going public came along to take their position, the vocational student seems to also occupy a different position in relation to academic knowledge.

Mark works hard to create and maintain a comradely and welcoming atmosphere among the groups I observe him teaching, which he sees himself to be a part of, and which he seems to set up against the (imagined) eccentricities and foibles of academics. He creates this environment by sometimes making self-deprecating jokes and acknowledging that people might find him, the library, the conventions of demonstrating learning through things like referencing, boring: “are we still awake?”, “let’s have a coffee break – don’t run away!”. He warns the class against being scared away by the way people write in journal articles - “sometimes they write in inaccessible ways. They use these big technical words...just because they can! They say, I know all these big words and I’m going to use them! But don’t be put off, you’ll get used to it, you might just need a dictionary like I do!”. Mark seeks to give the mature and vocational students reassurance when approaching new things.

Beyond making these students feel at ease, Mark is also positioning himself as trustworthy against what begins to feel like the object of his workshop, the academy. I believe there to be

two types of boundary work (Pereira, 2015, p. 101) at play here. Firstly, boundaries are being made around the nature of academic work, with tacit suggestions being made that vocational knowledge is not strictly part of it, and that what *is* part of it is sometimes arbitrary, a little eccentric. Secondly, Mark is articulating his own remit, as a down-to-earth mediator. It is telling, perhaps of him, and perhaps also of the group he's dealing with, that it is effective to teach about 'research' by explicitly rejecting it on any premise other than as something to hack, make a job out of, but not understand as a set of processes that might be intrinsically useful. The role of the librarian is the kindly lynchpin between the "normal" people like "us" and the strange world of the academy.

### **"What a librarian's about": Anxious professional status**

Having presented Mark's distinctive approach to work, professional identity, and the role of the academy, I will now reintroduce the team of ALLs in formal detail, describing their perceptions of their work and how it has changed over time. These features include status and validation as a "professional", the movement from a collection-based role to a teaching one, the reduction in roles associated with this shift and automation, the rise of a corporate style of active work procurement. In addition, I argue that this is another area in which the "power of proximity" within The Hive is found. The professional anxiety experienced by the ALLs, while being reflective of the librarianship profession as a whole, is particularly acute in The Hive in view of the fact the librarians are working within an institution in which a different process of professionalisation and user engagement – customer service, public librarianship - is happening simultaneously.

There are nine ALLs at The Hive, though many are part time and fulfil the role through job shares. Since I spent a year doing the fieldwork several have left and been replaced, returned from maternity leave, or changed their hours. They work under the structure of the University's schools and are organised so that every liaison librarian has responsibility for broadly similar academic subjects. At The Hive, there is one set of two librarians looking after: Psychology, Sport and Exercise Science, Worcester Business School, another clumping of four librarians looking after: Art, Education, Humanities and Law, and a final section for Health and Community, Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Science, Science and the Environment shared between three. The ALL's role in the life of The Hive is to support the library and information needs of the departments they represent. This often involves work on university campus as well as in the back offices, as well as taking turns on the "Ask a librarian" enquiry desk on the main floor of the library.

Liaison librarians like those at The Hive have generally come to replace what once were “subject librarians” in most UK university libraries. Pinfield and Hoodless (2018) describe the general trajectory of work patterns in academic libraries as going from a “hybrid” model, whereby subject librarians were specialists both in terms of their given subject matter and in terms of “functions” (such as cataloguing, classification, acquisitions, enquiry). This gave way to a “dual” model where subject librarians retained the knowledge and enquiry work specialism while a separate team took on the functional aspects. Hoodless and Pinfield have argued that the next development will be “functional librarians” where there is next to no expectation of subject knowledge, and all work will be functional (Rodwell and Fairbairn, 2008; Hoodless and Pinfield, 2018, p. 346). The Hive, with its “liaison” structure is somewhere between dual and functional, since they still have an attachment to subjects, but there are a great many under one person, and many functional aspects of library work are done by back-office staff, or are outsourced entirely.

LIS literature on the development of the liaison librarian fits within a strand that can be broadly encompassed in a desire to “locate librarianship’s identity” (Gray, 2012), and advocate for its continued relevance (Ginsberg and Crowley, 2005; Corral, 2015). Aside from abstract mentions of “funding pressures”, the global financial crisis, and so-called “internal drivers” in which “universities are changing their own funding models to place greater emphasis on the performance outcomes that must be achieved” (Rodwell and Fairbairn, 2008, p. 120), the evolution from subject specialist to liaison librarian is generally expressed in LIS literature in terms that suggest it is benign and neutral. Unlike subject librarians who are required to be very up to date and knowledgeable about their collection, liaison librarians can take on multiple subjects, have little subject knowledge, and instead have transferable skills.

Before focusing on the substance of the role as it stands today, I will explore two dimensions of change which, I argue, have necessitated an element of “identity work” (Ahuja, Heizmann and Clegg, 2019, p. 989) among the liaison librarians. First is the rapidity of technological advances, adding a temporal dimension of professional boundaries even within the liaison team. Second is the changing status of “professional accreditation” through a LIS qualification.

To address the first, a division exists among those librarians who had different roles prior to technological developments associated with the internet and communication. Mark, who we

have already met, recalls this time – when he began working for the “old” University of Worcester library twenty years ago in our interview:

*When I first started there were hardly any computers, they were in the office and we shared one...you had to dial up to a thing called “Dialogue” - I don’t know if you have ever heard of “Dialogue” - but it was used for searching. So you had to construct a search, put it in, and then send off a dialogue in the States and it would then come back with some articles you might wanna use. You had to send it off - it cost a fortune so we never used to use it (Mark, ALL, Interview)*

In parallel with technical developments, the evolution of this academic librarian role represents a movement from a specialist knowledge orientated role to a communication based one. Although the finding of articles in the case of Dialogue was outsourced to “the States”, the librarian – Mark – would have been one of the few people both with access to the machine, but also who had the training and knowledge to construct the search. A core part of the training of a librarian is in information retrieval systems, but while today “discovery searches” dominate library catalogues – “white box” google style catalogues which can handle natural language – in Mark’s day the catalogue would have necessitated knowledge of filtering processes like Boolean operators. With the development both of the internet and of discovery systems, this element of the librarian labour process and specialist knowledge is obsolete.

Another university librarian, Linda, captures the extent to which this evolution was borne out of outside changes in technology and the internet in our interview, saying:

*in the past, the value of a library was to provide access to materials which perhaps the wider population wouldn't have - that's why you went to university wasn't it: to read a subject. And we were the sort of gatekeepers to knowledge, and I think the whole profession went through a big time of angst, around the turn of the millennium, about what a librarian's about (Linda, Manager, Interview).*

In addition to corroborating this impression that the profession of librarianship – particularly academic librarianship – was fundamentally affected by the internet on a technical level, Linda’s quotation also powerfully encapsulates the emotional toll that a rapidly transformed

technology had on the professional and social status attached to being a librarian. In using a term like “angst”, there is a real sense of loss and uncertainty attached to the transformation.

Finally, her and Mark’s explanations both make clear that “what a librarian’s about” is forged not only in relation to a specific body of professional knowledge, but also in relationship with those the profession serves. Fournier’s work on professional legitimacy is pertinent here. She describes how,

*professional systems of knowledge need to establish the meaningfulness and legitimacy of their ‘truths’ in terms that can be apprehended by those whose lives are allegedly governed by these ‘truths’. The professions rely for their existence and survival on clients’ dependence and trust...this is never established once and for all but needs to be continuously negotiated (1999, p. 285).*

In the librarians’ case, as the development of technology stripped them of their unique position as “gatekeepers”, the dependence and trust of their “clients” was also stripped. The renegotiation of this trust into new areas is key to the liaison librarians at The Hive.

These technological changes intersect with the state and status of the LIS qualification as a boundary into the profession. Across Library and Information Studies (LIS) there is debate and discordancy of opinions around the necessity and validity of professional qualification in librarianship (CILIP, 2012). Specific library roles around cataloguing and classification which were done in-house and were considered core skills to be taught in library qualification courses have been outsourced to large cataloguing companies like Cassidy and Dawson (White, 2000; Reiners *et al.*, 2012, p. 34). As such, books come into the library with at least a basic record and class mark already assigned, and a small team of inhouse, generic cataloguers prepare the item for the shelves – not in contact with the subject librarian at all (Hales, 2017).

With this being the case, postgraduate courses in LIS tend not to include cataloguing and classification within their curriculums, and the argument is made that having a post graduate qualification in librarianship is not wholly necessary (Gray, 2012, p. 37). Instead, librarians are said to need emotional and communicative, managerial and teaching skills, which are generic and not profession specific.

The idea that perhaps librarians no longer need to have librarianship qualifications has not erased the sense that what they do is distinct from what others working in libraries do, or

that what they do is no longer professional, but it has complicated the parameters. Mark again has an illuminating sense of the anxiety around status in librarianship. In our interview, he simultaneously calls librarianship a “dying profession” but also one where there is a specific “outlook”. This outlook may no longer require a qualification, but it does appear to require something. He is critical of the elitism implied by positions being circumscribed to those with qualifications, but it is clearly important to him that he himself has one:

*there is a bit of pride in it, [I think] “I’ve done this and got the qualification”, so there is a sense of achievement, I think from that... respect, and when someone calls you a librarian... but that’s on a superficial level - it doesn’t mean anything...a smart person could easily do what I do without qualification, and someone else could come in and do that as well...they wouldn’t have to call themselves a librarian. (Mark, ALL, Interview)*

While it may not be an essential requirement to have a librarianship qualification, the special status of the academic team at The Hive in its interface with the front-of-house (CSAs) and “public library” staff is illustrated and made necessary in other ways. Sally, an ALL, describes how important having a post graduate qualification (the PGCert) was for her getting her liaison post:

*I actually started doing it [PGCert] when I was still working front-of-house as a means to getting into this career because when I spoke to Linda [manager] about what I might need she said most librarians that she interviews have librarianship master’s degrees and such like [which I don’t have]. Well that’s fine, but a lot of them don’t have the teaching qualification or background. So she said that’s a useful thing to have that would set you apart from other applicants (Sally, ALL, Interview)*

It is clear from both Mark and Sally’s responses that being a[n academic] librarian still means something, even if there isn’t such a clear route to achieving status as there was in the past. The competitive nature of the work can partly be explained by job scarcity, but it is also exacerbated by the historic status that hangs over the profession, anxiously now that the traditional markers for membership have been blurred. Sally’s conversation with a manager at The Hive also makes clear the extent to which this competitive edge in academic librarianship is in relationship to other library work, tacitly implied as not being a “career”.

Anxious identity work affects the academic liaison team not only as professional status changes, but also as their roles are affected simultaneously by technology and NPM. As Fournier says, “the negotiable nature of professionalism can be illustrated with the various ways in which the professions have reconstructed themselves in the face of managerialism” (Fournier, 1999, p. 287). A proliferation of articles within LIS research refer to the need to “capture value” using techniques like “Balanced Scorecard” (Corrall, 2015), SWOT analyses (Jordan-Makely, 2019), and market orientation exercises (Sen, 2006). The following section will explore the “pincer movement” of technology and managerialism further, with an exploration of the current reconfigured role of the librarian. It will describe how the deletion of traditional librarianship plays out in The Hive’s liaison team in ways that privilege confidence and self-marketing and the linguistic re/construction of academic work.

### Roles and expertise: *Collections* to teaching

When I ask Mark to explain what his day to day job entails, he immediately frames his response in terms of how it has changed, and what has been lost:

*So basically it's seeing students, that's the main part of the job, so it's nothing to do with books anymore, nothing to do with collections – that's all been taken away – well, not taken away – but moved to other people and different processes. So different teams coordinate, what we used to do, which we sort of miss in a way, 'cos you get an idea of what's in the library, what's there...[I] still have a fairly good idea...[but now it's] basically about seeing the students.*  
(Mark, ALL, Interview)

Mark’s analysis of his role is suggestive of several things which build a picture of the academic half of The Hive project. In his explanation, Mark explains his current role by referring to what it had been; how librarianship has changed since he began several decades previously, how these changes have removed some tasks from the librarian’s role (explicitly, and in some cases less easily definable ways), and what new tasks have been added.

The movement of library collections out of the remit of the subject librarian is pertinent not only in terms of how this process has affected the way that academic librarians relate to their occupational identity and expertise, but also in terms of how it is reflected in the constitution of the library itself. In terms of the library’s place within the wider university and trends across HE, it is significant that expertise and oversight has shifted hands from a broad base of librarians plus academics away from the library, and towards just a handful of academics

currently teaching at any one time. Without a collection development role, ALLs rely on what Linda (Manager) calls a “just-in-time model rather than a just-in-case model” (Interview). With purchasing being supposedly done at the “point of need”, the whole nature of what a library is alters: the library as a deliberate collection of collected knowledge(s) becomes a conglomeration of individual items. In chapter six, I explore the outcomes of this shift at the level of the books on the shelves, through viewing the library shelves as an archive. But at this stage it is important to flag up that this technical shift in labour styles has profound material effects on what it is to be a librarian and on what the library is: the conglomeration of individual items bought at the “point of need” rather than as part of a long standing collection policy nonetheless creates an accidental collection with consequences. That is to say, the field of acceptable knowledge is tacitly communicated through its existence on the shelf.

With the movement of a collection role out of the librarians’ hands, Patron Driven Acquisition (PDA)<sup>6</sup> (sometimes called Demand Driven Acquisition) and an electronic reading list system have come in. I described the reading list system in the previous chapter, whereby academic staff (inadvertently) choose and control acquisitions for the library within their subject area by virtue of the fact that only items put on the list are bought. PDA is described as “collecting for the moment” by Lugg (2011, p. 7) who emphasises that “instead of acquiring books that users might want, the library provides a broad range of new title information, enabling patrons to choose which books the library should buy”. Both PDA, and the reading list system have two significant outcomes on reshaping the nature of the library and the role of the librarian within it: firstly, they change the temporality of the library. Along with privileging the short term through the reading list system, PDA also makes immediate, individualised (and perceived) need count as more important than long term considerations. Meant positively, Lugg describes the driving imperative of PDA with clarity: “collecting for the ages is disrupted by collecting for the moment” (Lugg, 2011, p. 17). With the content of the library (physical and digital) decided overwhelmingly by either PDA or the Department reading list system, the temporality of the library and the physicality of the collection alters: the temporality shrinks from long term to daily demand, and the nature of demand changes from holistic and considered to immediate and instrumental.

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<sup>6</sup>Put simply, with PDA, library catalogues will show the meta data of a book but will not buy a license to it until a student or several asks for it.



The second major shift that PDA heralds and which is particularly evident at The Hive, is the silent way it transforms what it means to be a librarian. As Linda (a manager) says, with PDA it “means that there's less need for the liaison librarians to get involved” in collection development (interview). With this being the case, acquisitions move from the more specialised, trained and experienced (and therefore more costly) professional librarians in individual subject teams to one centralised team of “what you might call library assistants” (Mark, ALL, interview).

In his initial response to what his job now entails, Mark expresses some dilemmas about which changes are signs of progress. Twice he says something that might be heard as a negative shift in his role regarding collection development (or gatekeeping), and quickly qualifies it: “well, not taken away...”, “still have a fairly good idea”. However positive he might feel about his new role, it seems clear that moving into this area has not been his choice. That the majority of processes relating to stock purchase, collection development, cataloguing and classification (formerly considered key capacities of a librarian) have become the responsibility of a back office team at The Hive, and that library supply companies reduces the handle liaison librarians have of their subject area, are points not lost on Mark.

In contrast, Linda’s presentation of the development from subject to liaison librarian, acknowledges the shift but has positive things to say about it:

*I suppose we all got terribly stressed about the internet and all those resources and so on that would mean we weren't needed any more but we've just kind of taken a lot of the donkey work away, we've automated stuff that.... so we've taken away a lot of the clerical stuff and really freed people up to actually do the useful interaction and customer engagement and the helping people I guess. Which is what a lot of people go into librarianship for (Linda, Manager Interview).*

Although all the liaison librarians I interviewed were positive about the positions they now hold – as teaching and learning/liaison librarians - and much of the way academic librarianship has developed, some who had been in the profession long enough to remember how it had been also express a sense of loss. For Susan, when I bring up the idea that losing a direct hand in the physical collections of a subject might make it harder for librarians with expertise to build collections for their own sake she exclaimed, “Yes! Yes, it does! Oh my gosh don't get me started!” (Susan, ALL, Interview). Developing this, Susan gives a long explanation of how her role has changed since she began working for the University of

Worcester's library, ten years ago. It is clear from what she says that more than just cutting out time consuming "clerical stuff" drove it:

*When I first started at Worcester, we used to have the liaison librarian and the collections librarian, for each department. And then not long after, the two merged...so I was liaison librarian and collection librarian, from the point of view that I would order the stock and oversee the reading list for that department. So I spent quite a lot of time getting reading lists from staff, word documents as it was, checking for new orders, new editions, and all of that. And it did take a lot of time. But also, I had access to that whole department budget, so, if [the academics] didn't spend it, I would. And there was an understanding that I would be trusted... I knew the kinds of things that should be bought, because I'd seen the same courses, the same books, the same topics go round. You get to know the authors; you gain that knowledge.*  
(Susan, ALL, interview)

Susan clearly has mixed feelings about the direction her job has taken, and while she is enthusiastic about teaching, she is very aware of the impact that seemingly neutral and time-saving developments like the reading list system has had on her position. She goes on to say that she "lost access to the vast majority of the department's budget" and was left with a "drop in the ocean". This is not only a change to her job but is also a change to the esteem she felt she was held in when she was "trusted" to buy appropriate books. Additionally, these developments have also brought about reductions in staff – the loss of the "collection librarian". She and the other liaison librarians are now also responsible for large clusters of subjects where in the past there would often have been one librarian per subject who did all associated development and functional tasks (Hoodless and Pinfield, 2018).

Susan's explanation also shows that, for her, a feeling of respect and trust came with being a librarian in charge of stock selection and budget. As a kind of infrastructure, knowing and implementing the records and standards associated with librarianship was an explicit knowledge closely linked to what it meant to be a librarian. With the dismantling of that way of work, that way of knowing/doing occupational identity is made vulnerable and leads to a transformation. As Bowker and Leigh Star say (1999, p. 239), new infrastructures "change the very nature of what it is to do work, and what work will count as legitimate".

## Roles and expertise: Collections to *teaching*

Having lost the concreteness of the collections to organise the role of liaison librarian around, I now explore what liaison librarians now do, what the new occupational identity for librarians is. In addition to Mark, other liaison librarians also articulate their role as teaching and meeting based, mediating between students, information, and academic staff. Sally says, “so it's really just being a point of contact between academic staff and students for anything library or information literacy related ...and it's the information literacy stuff really with the students that's the big thing for us” (Sally, ALL, Interview). Nancy, says, “I tell the students, ‘cos I deal mainly with undergraduates, and I tell them my job is to help them find the information they need to complete their studies basically” (Nancy, ALL, Interview). The role is thus communication based and much is made of relationship management.

“Information Literacy”, “academic integrity” and “research skills” are all quoted by the liaison librarians as guiding principles for their new communications and teaching based role. When I asked Mark about Information Literacy, he says:

*I never use those words and things like [Information Literacy] because...how you define it? You can't really define it. So, we go down to the basics like academic skills, information skills that sort of says what you are trying to give the students. What you are trying to... so the way I work with it is you try and give, you try and facilitate a student to do this for themselves, so that's basically what I try and do...so that's basically what it is: seeing students, liaising with academic staff as much as possible. (Mark, ALL, Interview)*

In keeping with his interpersonal style, Mark simplifies terms he perhaps perceives as jargon, like Information Literacy. His repetition of words like “basics”, and “basically”, imply he sees his role as fundamental but foundational – important, but not exclusive. There is a sense given that the librarian is an intermediary, but not someone who needs explicit knowledge in the information they are mediating. In fact, Mark is keen to impress that he does not want that role, and that it's important not to see librarians as experts:

*once you're labelled [as a librarian], there is an assumption that you must know things, and I don't think it's true cos I mean I don't know everything at all, I must look things up myself...I think the traditional view of the librarian is that you are sitting on the enquiry desk and people come up to you and expect*

*you to know the answer, or know where to find the answer. (Mark, ALL, Interview)*

Again, here we see the dilemma between “traditional” views of librarianship and this new, much looser definition. In continuing to build up a rich picture of the new academic liaison librarian, its insertion within the HE environment generally, and in The Hive environment specifically, the next section turns to their role in teaching new concepts of “integrity”.

#### **New roles: academic integrity:**

The new vocabulary of librarianship expressed in interviews includes a concept of “academic integrity” which is largely built around the university employed liaison librarians’ role in a university-wide policy dealing with students committing plagiarism in assessed work. The librarians’ role in this is two-fold: they often work in academic departments teaching about referencing styles and how to avoid plagiarism. They also deliver one-to-one “academic integrity” appointments with students who, having been found to have plagiarised, are sent to the library as part of the university’s disciplining response: “See your librarian for punishment!” (Susan, ALL, Interview). Within this concept of academic integrity is a mixture of prescriptive vocabularies and a more vague and moralising rhetoric connected to notions of integrity: “word switch, sham paraphrasing, misinterpreting common knowledge, collusion, concealing sources, self-plagiarism, copy and paste” (*Avoiding plagiarism*, 2019) are particular types of plagiarism taught to students by ALLs through “academic integrity” training.

In considering this new element of what it now is to be an academic librarian, ALLs appear torn between adopting this new taxonomy of plagiarism and integrity as part of the role of the librarian, and feeling like it oversimplifies research and puts them, as librarians, in the unwanted position of the disciplinarian. A further tension is the extent to which on the one hand “academic integrity” appears like a check list of quite esoteric classifications of behaviours that those perpetrating plagiarism would never be aware of, and on the other, an appeal to some vaguely defined moral framework that sits in keeping with the University of Worcester’s values of “professionalism, inclusiveness, integrity, and community”. In LIS literature from the United States, this moral dimension is more advanced and has been enshrined as a series of “dispositions” in the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL)’s “Framework for Information Literacy” (Jochumsen, Skot-Hansen and Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2017). These dispositions are considered “intellectual virtues” and include

“open-mindedness, self-awareness, respectfulness, curiosity, and flexibility” (Brooks, 2017, p. 604).

Nancy, another liaison librarian, is passionate about the “ethics and moral values” of academic standards around plagiarism, saying:

*I always say it's respect, it's respect to the other people's work, it's acknowledging their achievements and their contributions and it's that code of conduct and being transparent as well about what you have read, allowing others to double check your work to critique and criticise so actually I try to focus on those ethics and moral values much more than [rules]. I try to not make them think of them as rules (Nancy, ALL, Interview).*

Heather, who is a younger liaison librarian without experience of the more traditional functions of the job expresses further discomfort with the university's approach to plagiarism, saying:

*it sometimes seems a bit harsh and actually the punishment procedure for academic integrity at this university is really harsh, cos often... [students] forget it and then...copy and paste something in but... don't put a reference. It happens by accident...they don't have the time to check and so there are lack of knowledge issues and time management issues...so there are issues to address but the punishment is harsh (Heather, ALL, Interview)*

In both of these cases I observed a desire to stretch beyond the prescriptive labels of “academic integrity” as well as a commitment to a broader idea of academic enterprise. Unfortunately, ALLs were simultaneously curtailed by a lack of time to actually engage with students in the way they wanted to. Holly says “unfortunately I think a lot of our teaching time is taken up with...the technical aspects of referencing...which is a shame, because there's more to it than that...we want to talk to them about how to do proper research” (Holly, ALL, Interview). Two issues seem pertinent here: firstly, that plagiarism is a big topic for universities in the age of the internet and since librarians are poised to teach it, it becomes a go-to for them and academic faculty. Secondly, in the absence of their traditional role with collections and acquisitions, librarians like these must advocate heavily for their continued place in academic departments, and plagiarism is, unfortunately, a more sure-fire way-in than “how to do proper research”. The networking element of the ALL role that this relies on is further discussed below.

## Confidence and work procurement

A further key feature, then, of this new librarianship based around liaison and relationship management rather than explicit expertise is the way that work must be procured. Unlike collections development or subject librarianship as it was, ALL at The Hive must actively network, market, and negotiate to establish and maintain their place in the academic landscape of the university. Although people are very enthusiastic about the work they now do, it is frequently presented to me as quite tough for the liaison librarians to get going with the groups they are liaising with. Liaison work is articulated as relying very much on the building of relationships with students, staff and the library. Several interviewees underline how hard they work in “networking” in order to show academic departments and their students that the work being done in liaison is worthwhile.

In many interviews, allusions to business practices like “negotiation” and “networking” are very common, as are indications that interpersonal and emotional skills figure highly in what is required of liaison librarians. Sally describes trying to gain access to lecturer’s classes in order to deliver research skills classes:

*a lecturer might ask what they'd like you to cover and they might also say how much time they're willing to give you, and it's not always enough. If you say you can do sorting resources and referencing and this and that and [then they say] “oh yeah I can give you twenty minutes”. That's not gonna happen. Then you have to try to negotiate, [and say] that's not going to be enough for me to cover all of these things (Sally, ALL, Interview)*

This negotiation is often successful, and several librarians tell me that once they’ve established ongoing contact with academic departments and shown themselves to be helpful it’s easier to get repeat work. However, liaison librarians must work hard to get to that point, illustrating how much of their role is not understood or not seen easily as being within the day to day work of academic services. Again, Sally describes the best part of her working towards getting a PGCert qualification as being the networking opportunities it provides her, and those opportunities showing her she needs to be more visible:

*It's amazing how many of them say, 'oh I didn't know that's what the library did, and we say, oh yes, we do teach we do this that and the other - I didn't know that, that's great, I'll get you to come to my class... and they had no idea, you're just kind of thinking that they just don't want you there and*

*actually they didn't even know you gave that service, they didn't really know what you did (Sally, ALL, Interview)*

While several of the liaison team appear quite comfortable with the expectation of muscling into departments and ensuring that they are seen, known and invited back to work, it's an aspect of the job that highlights how valuable confidence, self-marketing, and marketing of the library now is to librarianship. Success in the role is not so connected to explicit skills, competency and knowledge, but rather is based on something like corporate account management and confident communication. As such, some capable librarians will fare less well, and express nerves and anxiety about it. Two of the youngest members of the liaison team, both women, talked revealingly about struggles with confidence both in contact with students and with their peers. One uses the description of "shambrarian" to describe herself, a jokey nickname for people who work in libraries but aren't (or don't feel like they are) legitimate librarians. That she has a Master's degree in librarianship shows that crossing the divide into "librarian" is not, or no longer is, straightforwardly to do with formal qualifications, but is instead about a less tangible sense of self. In teaching, nerves also create worry in some liaison librarians but not others. I ask Heather how a recent teaching session had gone, and she describes in detail how she felt when a class of students began chatting and not concentrating:

*And so I was doing a session about library search; a sort of mix of induction to library, library search and tried to make it interactive, and I was really new so I was a bit nervous, so I really tried to stay to my presentation more than anything else - so it was a lecture session. And the tutor she was really helping me in trying to keep them calm but then she went outside to wait for the others and I was ok for a while but when I lost my plot a little bit and was like urm I'm not sure what's next I had that moment of urm, they took that advantage and started talking to each other so it was quite hard to get them back so when she came in again she made them calm again and that was fine but I didn't feel that confident about the whole thing...(Heather, ALL, Interview)*

Heather's vulnerability here may have a lot to do with the size of the class and behaviour of the students, but it is also clear that her perception of success is tied with her confidence. Given what Sally says about academic staff not realising what librarians can offer, and what I

have already detailed with the shift of collections away from the librarian, the relationship between the ALLs and academic staff additionally seems pertinent.

The liaison librarian team being required to procure work in this confident and outgoing way is, I think, a sign of vulnerability. Sally describes being “quite reliant on a sense of good will from the academic staff - do they buy into the importance of information literacy, and if they do, do they see us, the librarians, as the people who will deliver that? or do they think they can deliver it better themselves?” (Sally, ALL, Interview), indicating that her role is precarious. Although they are the qualified, professional, and better paid group compared with the front-of-house team the second part of this chapter looks at, the liaison librarians must constantly work to prove themselves. Unlike the front-of-house team, there is a question mark around the future of the ALLs, and the fact that many academic staff are not sure or aware of their value is indicative of this.

As a result, I felt that the liaison team were generally keen to differentiate themselves both from the public side and the front-of-house side of The Hive. Even though they were supportive of the idea of The Hive, ALLs worked very hard to create and maintain relevance in academic departments, and part of that seemed – inadvertently - to come from classifying themselves differently to their partners on the floor. The idea of the power of proximity afforded by The Hive came into play again here. In being the only staff members afforded the “Ask a Librarian” desk at The Hive, the integration of staff could only be possible through a simultaneous process of accepting essential difference.

In concluding this section, I argued that ALLs were partly engaged in boundary work that came as a result of the fast-changing library and HE environment, and that this happens in a dynamic with the constituent parts of The Hive. Within this dynamic, differentiation from the front of house and non-professional team of workers at The Hive seemed necessary. It is to that side of the library’s integration that this chapter now turns, with the aim of highlighting the extent to which the ALL team is in a dynamic relationship with the front-of-house team.

### **The Customer Service Assistant - Roving and emotional labour**

As I have argued, The Hive’s integration project at a staff level is in many ways a dynamic between differently understood worths: bodies, knowledges. Having focused extensively on the ALL experience, I now turn to the staff most interacted with in The Hive: the customer service assistant.



In this section, I initially flesh out the divergent process of professionalisation that was evident in this grouping of Hive staff compared with the Academic Liaison Librarians, drawing on literatures around emotional and embodied labour. These processes are understood through the evocation of “professional”, not through explicit membership of a group governed by rules and knowledge (as we saw with ALLs), but rather as actions and expectations of tightly controlled self-management associated with NPM, customer service expectations and emotionally embodied labour.

### Emotional labour

Emotional labour is an important concept through which I will discuss the differential experiences of the Front-of-house team at The Hive, so I begin with a brief overview. Hochschild, who first conceptualised the term “emotional labour” in 1983 defined it as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial display” and went on to explain it as requiring “one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (p7). Through research on airline attendants, Hochschild developed the idea of “feeling management” which is necessitated in certain lines (and times) of work. In the case of the air attendants, this emotional labour was argued to be found in the fact that attendants were not only paid for practical tasks but were expected to sell an “experience” to customers through friendliness and attentiveness. “Emotional work”, on the other hand, is the kind of everyday feelings management that we all do, but that is less connected to instrumental outcomes, and more embedded either in professional values beyond the company at hand, or personal values and belongings.

Bolton (2005, p. 294) problematises Hochschild’s original thesis, arguing that, though pioneering, it oversimplifies types of emotion work, and paints too deterministic a picture of exploitation under emotional labour, and suggests “moving on” from this enduring scholarship. Bolton stresses that there are a variety of different motivations and feeling rules at play when emotions are managed at work, that emotional workers are skilled managers, and that they have more agency to subvert and misbehave than Hochschild’s original thesis allowed for (Bolton and Boyd, 2003, p. 294). Usefully for the context of this thesis of The Hive, she extends Hochschild’s binary – of emotional work and emotional labour - with a differentiation between “pecuniary emotion management” and “prescriptive emotion management” with the first being akin to commercial rules, the second with professional rules embedded within it. Bolton writes of prescriptive emotion management:

*if the feeling rules are dictated via membership in a professional body the motivation is rarely purely instrumental but connected with ideas of social status...professionals often have to balance the feeling rules of their profession against the instrumental demands of public policy, or the dictates of the public bureaucracy that gives them employment (Bolton, 2005, pp. 94–95).*

In the case of the front-of-house - or, “customer service assistants” - at The Hive, I will develop the idea that they align more with an NPM style of professionalisation with concurrent expectations of pecuniary emotion management and emotional labour. In the context of their place within The Hive integration project, I argue that front-of-house staff operate in sharp relief to what we learned earlier about the ALLs, and that this places a greater burden of emotional labour on them to maintain the image of an integrated project. In this section, I first set out the role of front-of-house workers, I then explore the differential emotional and physical demands of their role in contrast to the ALLs through discussion of the “roving model” and its inception and assumptions. I then explore how front-of-house roles are conceived by members of staff and explain how these conceptions vary between those who came from the former University of Worcester library and those who came from the county. Similarly, conceptions of library work vary based on age and experience. I conclude the empirical section by returning to the role these members of staff are playing in the “saved narrative” of the wider integration project referred to in the previous chapter.

### **Meeting the Front-of-House team**

Immediately, the manner through which I gained access and developed relationships with front of house staff was indicative of their difference from ALLs. Whereas liaison librarians have publicly available contact details and mini biographies on The Hive Website, the front-of-house staff teams do not, and I instead set up the semi-structured interviews through a doodle poll disseminated by a library manager. This meant that interviewees self-selected, and as such I generally talked to people with perspectives which they were keen to share, and willing to give up time to do so. Perhaps relatedly, but probably by a happy accident, the small group of non-professional library staff I interviewed came from an interesting range of roles: apprentices, volunteers, a worker with two part-time roles, and a worker who opted to change from a front-of-house role when moving from The Peirson Library to The Hive. All are referred to by me as “CSA” to reflect their roles, rather than their differential employment terms.

## Black clothes and roving – life on the floor of the Hive.

Team-work and individual self-management form crucial components of the front-of-house version of the professional worker. “Teams” cover the physical floor space of different areas of the library floor and all have one daily team leader: one team covers floor 3 (main library), another covers floors 1 (entrance foyer and children’s library) and 0 (“shared study”), and members of each cover the less active floors of 4 (silent) and 2 (business area and bookable study rooms). A Team Leader – who could be employed by either the university or the council - covers each shift, and has overall responsibility for the team, as well as line-managing members of it. I am told that generally county-council employed staff will have county council managers, and university staff will have university managers, but that there are exceptions: Jessica, a CSA apprentice, is employed by the County Council but has a University line manager because, she says, hers was considered “the best person to manage people” (Jessica, CSA interview). This general rule is suggestive of the fact that despite the narrative of integration, work roles differ and divisions matter.

The ubiquity of black clothes and gold lanyards referred to at the beginning of the chapter is not only a signal of integration, but also a feature of The Hive’s behaviour management model by staff on the library floor. Jane, a manager, tells me the idea is a “customer service model” where you are never far away from help – or, they are never far from you (Jane, Manager, Interview). On the five floors of The Hive, the front-of-house team are organised in a roving model, whereby, unlike the ALL, they have no fixed desk and are often walking around the building, running errands like locating and shelving books, or standing at the entrance to different floors to welcome people coming in. There are two staff desks on floor 3, and one on floor 0, which each team can use, but, unlike the “Ask a librarian” desk the academic librarians have, they are at bar stool height and appear uncomfortable; staff tend to temporarily hover there to do tasks rather than dwell or sit there for long periods of time. These tasks include helping library users with the library catalogue, the self-checkout and photocopy machines, and registering new library members with library cards.

The development of “roving” staff has emerged in both academic and public libraries in opposition to the traditional positioning of the librarian behind the desk. In practical terms, roving means that a team of staff is dispersed across the library floor, responding to library users from wherever they happen to be, rather than the user needing to come up to the desk. It also means that a variety of tasks and duties can be collapsed into one role; instead of there

being enquiry desk teams, shelving teams, circulation desk teams, a team of roving assistants do all these jobs as and when the need arises.

The “roving model” generally appears in mainstream LIS literature in language that is quite disparaging of any previous understanding of library work, or, libraries. The need for staff to “venture out from behind the desk” (Bremer, 2017, p. 106), “get personal” (Nunn and Ruane, 2011), and “reach out” (Henry et al., 2012), carry valued connotations about “traditional” work styles. Linda, a manager, explains changes to work styles in terms of resistance to “change”:

*you know a classic example is we used to have a desk with four members of staff stamping books, and I can remember when we first introduced self-service machines, [staff] were terribly worried about that and they were saying ‘well, we can talk to students whilst we’re stamping out their books, and we can help them’ ...[and I thought] ‘well actually you can do that anyway, you don’t need to be stamping a book at the same time’, you know what I mean? (Linda, Manager, Interview)*

It is telling that Linda refers to numbers behind desks, rather than just the principle, and this mention is illustrative of the clear money saving incentive that doing away with desks has. As with many supermarkets’ staffing models, roving allows constant active work, switching from one mode to another as needs rise and fall, so there would no justification for “four” members of staff to be sat with nothing to do, at any point. CSA’s are adaptive to rhythm and must adapt their bodies to changing needs and intensities. The introduction of a “roving model” implies a professionalism among The Hive’s “front of house staff” that is very much in keeping with shop-service standards, and contrasts with the ALLs, whose professional identity appeals to standards of academia. The Hive’s staff induction presentation makes clear that roving staff need to be “proactive”: “Go to customers – don’t wait for them to look for you” (Hive, 2019).

Different expectations of bodies and their relationship with work styles are implicit here. Roving reduces the likelihood of queues building up at any point in The Hive. The only place I ever observed queues are the ones going to “The Hub” (council services) desk, and those at the café. Instead of the customer coming to the worker, the worker moves to the customer, so must be able-bodied and mobile in order to offer agile and personable service; they can go to the shelves with the customer, rather than pointing them in the right direction, for

example. As I explore below, this necessitated mobility sits in contrast with the ALL's who either sit in a back office, or on the "Ask a Librarian" Desk.

### Relegated Roles

In terms of the growing concept of classifications within different types of work expected within the integration project of The Hive, the intersection of body/mobility work and knowledge/service labour is key to reinforcing difference between front-of-house and back-of-house, and academic and non-academic labour.

Academic queries are expected to be referred by front-of-house staff to the "Ask a Librarian desk" in such a manner that seems to have much more to do with revealing and reinforcing difference in terms of intellectual expectations of work than need or capability of staff. Holly, who had been a front-of-house library assistant at the 'old' University of Worcester library, describes her decision to move into back-office work when she moved to The Hive with reference to the way that library assistant work changed during the process of integration. It is clear from the way she verbalises this process that, for her, The Hive was never just the bringing together of two parties of staffs and publics, but that modes and expectations of work also changed with the move. In reference to the fact that front-of-house staff are expected to refer research enquiries to academic liaison staff rather than answer them themselves, she told me:

*we now have an enquiry desk that the librarians sit at to give advice but before that it would be anybody front-of-house [doing that work], you know, showing people how to get online journals...if [students] came in with a query we'd make sure they have all the options to answer the query. And that used to give [us] huge amounts of satisfaction, so I think, they all felt, they all felt part of "the team" - they didn't just feel like they were working in a shop. Whereas I think now it's a little bit more like that here. Because it, it tends to be a little more superficial on the whole. And then you refer on to the [librarian] (Holly, CSA, interview)*

Holly's sentiments here echo discussions in this chapter's previous section – the sense that there is anxious boundary work going on about what is and is not considered "real" library work. What she says adds the element that outside factors are deepening this divide – expediency and general customer service ethos – rather than it being the individual agency of the academic librarian seeking to distance themselves from public work. It is especially

poignant given The Hive's emphasis on staff integration that Holly describes her previous workplace as being more of a "team" than the enforced 'team' she experiences now.

What this comment also brings into sharp relief is the boundary work evident within organisations like libraries – and particularly starkly at The Hive where so many other factors appear in competition – between service work and knowledge work. While many believe the label benign, it seems to me that the difference between the title "library assistant" and "customer service assistant" matters here. Holly explicitly denigrates the idea that to be a front-of-house assistant is like "working in a shop", because she felt they were trained and capable of doing much "more".

In contrast, Jessica, an apprentice who is working towards a qualification in Customer Service, has not had the experience of being a library assistant in the same way that Holly had, and portrays an understanding of her role which is perhaps more closely aligned with that of shop work. When I ask her whether she felt "customer service" described what she did in her job, she replied enthusiastically in a very different manner to Holly above:

*a lot of what we do is customer service based yeah... so we're always thinking about how we can improve, and making sure everyone has a positive experience here and feels welcome...and that it's just...encouraging people to come back. (Jessica, CSA, Interview)*

Over time, it became clear to me that divisions exist not just between front-of-house and back-of-house, or between academic and public, but that each binary is itself often further divided, with different classifications being appealed to at different times. Holly, an older and more experienced employee shows her sense that front-of-house workers differ both from Jessica's and from her perception of council employees' in her expectations of library work:

*...it hasn't been such a big change for the people who came from the county library because that is very much how they are used to working, but I think [university] staff who are front-of-house found it quite difficult, because they didn't have the same type of satisfaction that comes from helping with more in-depth queries, and that had developed them personally because they had to be trained to be able to answer them.. So I don't think they...it has to be very restrictive, they do long shifts, they have to consult before they have breaks and things, so it is much more rigid than it used to be. (Holly, CSA Interview)*

Several things are apparent here: firstly, that the divisions integral to the integration are multifaceted: academic and non-academic parts of the front-of-house team are deemed to experience the same work differently. While perhaps unintentionally, there is a tacit assumption that public library enquiries will be inherently less “in-depth” than university ones. Secondly, there is a sense in which The Hive has not only brought together a variety of different work styles, but also that in doing so, some responsibilities have evolved out of the hands of front-of-house staff and moved them into the exclusive domain of ALLs. The following section picks up on the final point made by Holly about rigidity and self-management.

### Time organisation and NPM

Clearly, the nature of front-of-housework at The Hive is governed by different structures, expectations, and competencies than the academic liaison work, and operated on a service orientated “appeal to professionalism”. Below I explore time and responsibility management through reference to emotional labour and the idea of professionalisation as a disciplinary mechanism as explored by Fournier (1999, p. 293): “The appeal to professionalism serves to ‘responsibilise’ autonomy by delineating the ‘competence’ of the ‘professional employee’, by instilling ‘professional like’ norms and work ethics which govern not simply productive behaviour but more fundamentally employees’ subjectivities.”

The Hive’s front-of-house “Star system” is one such important way of “responsibilising” individuals in such a way that formal management is discreet, and self-management is made paramount. Within the Star system, all members of the team are allocated certain roles and duties of a managerial nature. Jessica, The Hive’s customer service apprentice explains to me how her shifts and breaks are organised around a daily allocation of a “star:”

*So we have “stars of the day” who sort out people’s lunches and breaks and make sure we have staffing levels covered throughout the day, so when people are off on lunch...we don’t get shortages (Jessica, CSA, Interview)*

Being called a “star” – while enjoyed by staff – struck me as being almost akin to being made the milk monitor at school; explicitly, it marks a classification between different groups of workers within The Hive. Though experienced in a benign way by many front-of-house staff members, when contrasted with the ALL team, the scheme is noticeably lacking in affording individual agency to workers. While there is a display of self-government in the sense that every member of the team, regardless of whether their actual job has any managerial or

supervisory element, must take charge for others and negotiate key parts of their work satisfaction, this does not offer any genuine agency. People must have a name for their role – Star – to take these decisions, there is not an opt out, and people would not be able to freely choose exactly when to have breaks since a job for the Star is to “make sure we have staffing levels covered throughout the day”.

That staff are not able to decide exactly when and how they want breaks is understandable given the size of the building and volume of staff, but the manner of its organisation is generative of feelings of some alienation. In the style of NPM, the star system also seems to diffuse potential friction between workers and management by passing formal management roles of discipline to peers. Here, Holly alludes to the rigidity of the “Star” system in comparison to her time at the old library:

*What tended to happen...we'd all cooperate together, so if somebody wanted a break or if someone was ill or someone had to go early, someone else would just step in, you didn't have to say, "you do this and you do that" whereas I think here, because it's so much bigger and so much more anonymous, people don't even necessarily have to know each other very well, everything has to be organised. (Holly, CSA, Interview)*

The spontaneous cooperation experienced between colleagues who know and trust one another is slowly being replaced, in The Hive and elsewhere, by managerialised, anonymous and professionalised Stars, arguably curbing employees' own sense of personal worth. Yet this shift goes hand in hand with an increased focus on customer service models, which make more and more demands, not simply on employees' time, but on their emotional selves.

### **“Everyone is so nice”**

Not surprisingly, the front-of-house roles have different demands in terms of emotional labour to the ALLs. To some degree, this is an unavoidable part of a public-facing role, where those “publicly observable facial display(s)” Hochschild discusses are, understandably, a matter of relevance. What struck me was the emphasis that was placed on the ‘niceness’ of the front-of-house staff and the way in which this niceness formed a significant pillar of the broader narrative about The Hive. As I discussed in chapter four, the “saved narrative” of The Hive included a repetition of the idea that everyone in the front-of-house team is “so nice”, nice enough to carry any other limitation. It was a compliment that was directed at one particular section of staff, but one which came from those who had less engagement with



the general public, and who seemed quite content to remain out of view. Looked at through the lens of emotional labour, these compliments become points of division, between those expected to smile for their wage, and those freed of such expectations.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have focused on structure of The Hive through a professional lens. By engaging closely with the changing role of the ALLs and their position within The Hive I reflect on the boundary between public and academic knowledges and positions within public space. Employing the concept of the pincer movement of managerialism and technology, I highlighted the extent to which the traditional role of the librarian had changed, and have reflected on how this has affected both those engaging with that role, but more importantly those engaging with public knowledge.

The dance between classification and integration begun in the previous chapter is at play here, with regard to the way the professional identities of different teams operate in The Hive. As with chapter four, I find there to be a simultaneous rush to classify and collapse categories in this area of The Hive, which is illustrative of an uneasy accommodation between The Hive's partners. While many aspects of the Academic Liaison team are successful and popular, I find that implicit in the success of efforts to make the integration project successful is, paradoxically, the maintenance of difference; divisions between students and non-students, academic and public. Though certainly a complex and overdetermined process, I feel this is reflective of the wider perceptions of the two communities (academic, public) in public understanding. In that sense, the increasing differentiation between academic librarianship and public customer service library work mirrors the increasing differentiation between university and non-university going publics.

Thinking beyond The Hive's contained walls, the findings of this chapter speak to broader conversations about work within libraries and HE. Beyond the singular issues of library work's transformation – in terms of expertise and NPM – threads followed in this chapter relate more generally to the affective outcomes of increasingly merged, integrated and outsourced functions of public services. These outcomes relate both to those working in them, and by consequence, those receiving them. We saw in this chapter that occupational identity matters to people, even and especially as formal access to professions (such as librarianship) is complicated by the pincer movement of technology and professionalisation. This pincer movement can contribute to the fostering of feelings of uncertainty around professional identity and relational worth. In a context like the university, it also stealthily transforms the

nature of library collections and the curated organisation of knowledge through them. Both these developments affect the ways that knowledge is engaged with and contribute to a feeling in HE that education is transactional and instrumental.

We also saw the limits of any culture of integration when the conditions of work and its recognition are unequal. The asymmetry of contracts and emotional labour expectations resulted in differential experiences and perceptions of work which may also affect the experiences of students and members of the general public engaging with them. Attending to the emotional and embodied labour of different categories of public service worker reveals the ways in which any project of integration will inevitably be susceptible to additional classificatory practices, albeit perhaps beyond its control. Since the sectors of Higher Education and Public Services in general are both homes to increasing outsourcing and casualisation practices, the experiences of The Hive here speak back to those areas more generally.

## Chapter 6 - sharing knowledge, sharing space

### Introduction: the library floor

The final chapter returns to the beginning. I revisit the walkthrough of the introductory chapter and re-approach The Hive as a site of rhythm, atmosphere, and encounter. This first section focuses on the building itself as a curated and classifying space and looks to its physical boundaries. Through paying attention to the boundary of the building I can gauge and describe the lived context of The Hive in the city of Worcester in order to attend to who and how the life and practices of the library itself affects. By engaging with who comes in but also who does not, where they are directed, where subtle and atmospheric invitations are and are not extended, I explore how the ideas of classification/convergence, worth, dis/comfort, and power play out affectively, before the doors to the library even open. Paying attention to these edges is akin to paying attention to the paratext of a book, and in the same way, The Hive's boundary space is the "threshold for interpretation" (Genette, 2010).

In valuing the micro, the everyday, and the ordinary, this chapter aims to bring to light The Hive's integration at the granular level: while chapter four looked at integration and classification at a strategic and institutional level, and chapter five looked at integration and professional life, this is integration and boundary work at the level of individual interaction. In terms of my -graphy, this chapter section is intended to be the 'loosest' too, and the closest to what Stewart calls "creative non-fictional, or fictocritical" (Stewart, 2014) in her own work. Like her, this allows me to "slow down and shrink" analysis (p. 55), and also to try to create a sense of the atmospheres and shared feelings that accompanied the conversations in focus.

### Re-Walkthrough: The Boundary space

*"Drama is default: "OI where the FOCK'S Kingy? Well I ain't fuckin' waitin'", a man shouts from outside The Hive's double door. He obviously then waits, what else is he going to do? I watched a couple argue in almost boring repetition for half an hour. One walking away, then walking back, the other walking away then walking back, all around The Hive, threatening to go in, but not managing it. Swear words often get given emphasis. Passions are so strongly and constantly felt, every speech is hard, brittle, almost difficult to get out. But melding with this passion and drama, the constant play of hardness, hard game, is the irony of it all playing out as a congregation*

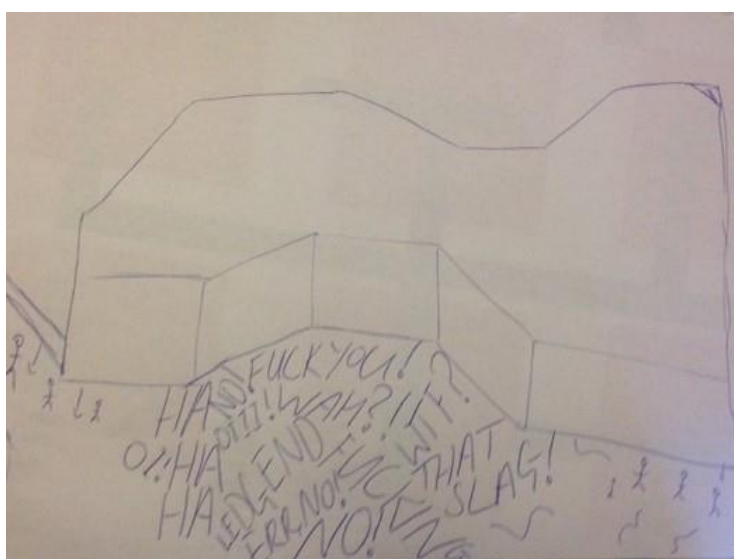
*outside a library. Men strut to the door of The Hive, hips pushed forward, hands in pockets, then back away and discuss. Several people have been issued with Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and can't enter The Hive since it's a council building, but many more than that just seem reticent to go in. The space of The Hive is like a different world to some perhaps, and discussion in The Hive can't be at the same volume that they need outside." (Reflection)*

The Hive overflows its physical building. Approaching the library means first approaching its large elevated pavement area and engaging with it. A golden footbridge links Worcester's small and out of fashion shopping centre, Crowngate, to The Hive on one side, and a series of other steps and footbridges joins the other side with carparks or the city's river. It is on this river side that the main University of Worcester's campus can be approached by a twenty-minute walk. This surrounding space has Hive branding, is in The Hive's signature colours: golden yellow, pale grey, and grey stone.

Although its extension beyond the physical walls might suggest The Hive's overflowing, over-spilling capacity, its softness and ease, through sitting outside the building repeatedly and engaging with its approach and the public's engagement with it I came to appreciate it differently. Initially it struck me as feeling a bit like a holding area – a temporary and malleable space between being inside and outside, the first gateway into the building. In the medical sense, a holding area is a space outside the main site of activity (theatre, ward, emergency room) that is designed to be temporary. Holding areas are places to be made comfortable until it is time to progress onwards; it is expected that that time will come, that you are supposed to be there. At times, and for some, this description fitted The Hive's external surroundings – many people approached the space through the outer area and swept on inside, through the totally transparent doors that glide open with bodily proximity.

For others, this boundary space clearly did not act as a holding space in that sense. Instead, it was more like a two-step boundary, the first filter. However unconscious, the multiple layers of entrance created a soft discomfort for some, before the harder frontier of that same door. The door's transparency was not definitive: pure glass without handles can be seen straight through but can also create an off-putting reflection – a reflection that actually obscures what is on the other side. A reflection reminding those who they are, who might not actually belong in the golden library. In the end, 'boundary space' seemed a more fitting descriptor to me, suggesting the entrance as a wall that could be crossed, but could also become hard and imposing.

It is in this permeable boundary space between inside and outside, Worcester and Hive, that first impressions create atmospheres. As this chapter will explore, turning to the life of The Hive as it plays out among the books was affective and affecting, and my reading of the space required that I drew myself in, moving into the picture. The boundary space allows groups to gather and scenes to play out in open and uncommercial space. The people who usually spend time in this space are either young teens in big groups, or smaller groups of single adults – those not obviously couples, families, or university students. There are transient movements by many others using The Hive - people with young children, families, older people, but they do not dwell to the same extent; they have somewhere to be, somewhere to go to.



**FIGURE 15**

On large sheets of paper, I drew the entrance from my vantage point to the side of the action (Figure 15). By spreading urgent expletives across the ground, I sought to capture how, when these interruptions happen, they spread out and seem to dominate the atmosphere. The elevated voices seem a display of a shallow form of

power; a temporary and weakly held ownership of the space, a tussle that will continue to play out inside the building. People coming around the corners of the building on either side must negotiate this, sometimes seeming to almost physically shrink towards the sides of the building before sliding through its entrance. Their entrance into the building itself can sometime seem almost a bit of an escape.

That said, this entrance by perturbed families and individuals still seems intuitively easier than life seems to feel for those waiting for something to happen outside. I chat to some of these young lads who have been sat around, one with a bike, all with energy drinks. They were in between leaving school and entering the world of work – stuck. One said he sometimes helped his dad who is a landscape gardener, but they were all hoping to go to college instead. I ask them what they make of The Hive and if they use it. They go quite shy

but do their best to sound bullish, saying they like to get stoned and use the computers sometimes, but not much else.

There is a palpable if hard to pin down class element to the way the building is interacted with from the outside as much as indoors. The content of the dramatic interjections and dominations of the outside boundary space suggest discomforts. Firstly, discomfort with the stuff of life. The sonic and numeric volume of arguments reflect what Stewart calls “the laboured viscosity of life” (Stewart, 2011, p. 451) that comes through a poverty that is quotidian. As she goes on to describe, this is a poverty that is not necessarily all-out and “self-evident” but more one that is experienced as an everyday “attunement to a singular world’s texture and shine” (p. 450). Secondly, the fact that these groups and behaviours rub up against one another in a town that is also comfortable and prosperous for many others makes the sense of precarity and volatility in the shared public space more pronounced. It is a discomfort that is relational, these “stuck” people rub up against the building of The Hive and what it might represent, and the comfortable others who use it. As I explore by going inside The Hive in the following section, spreading out physically and sonically across this frontier space represented a short-lived and ultimately limited power by these people, but ultimately did not remove the discomfort they experienced more regularly.

The daily mundane drama of “stuck” people is not always the dominating atmosphere of The Hive, but as I sit and tune “into others’ movements and gestures, attentions and anticipations, letting different rhythms make themselves felt” (Lyon, 2019, p. 80) its regularity and pervasive discomfort sometimes made it feel that way to me. The boundary space is

often just a through-way, people going from one side of town to the other without engaging too heavily with the building. At other times – particularly weekends when families dominate – the space is transformed and the air lifts. People seem to grow as they come around the corner, and kids show their comfort by using the ample space as a dancing area, a space to scoot around, ask questions of the adults with them. In this entry space the wonder of The Hive for young children especially is palpable; kids go in with grandparents and leave with bags-for-life stuffed with books. A staff member I talk to tells

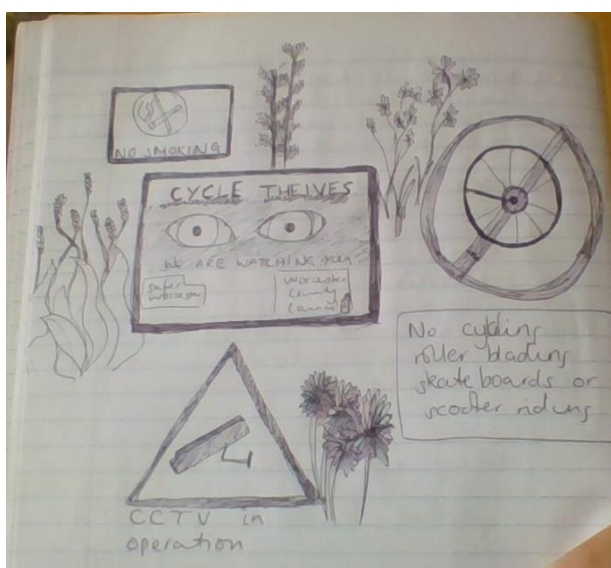


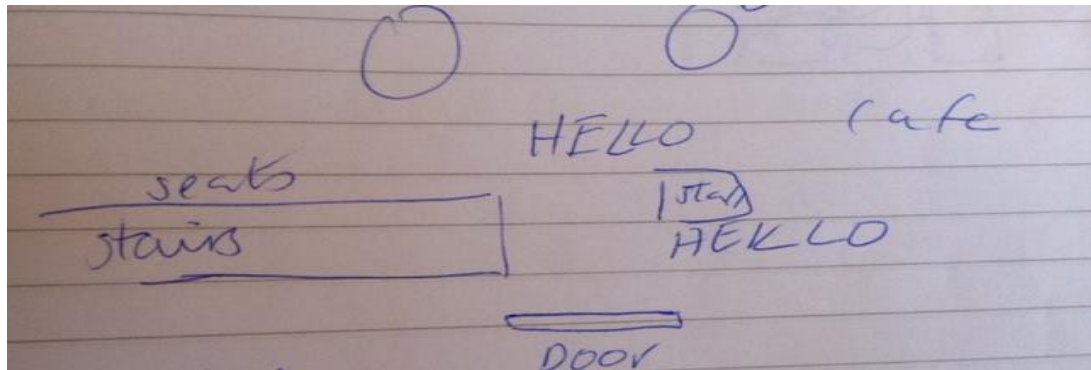
FIGURE 16

me she brings her grandchildren every week and they exclaim “the Five!” ([cute] sic) as they approach it.

The freedom implied in these movements is tempered significantly by the surveillance that dominates the space. Not only does the space operate as a boundary because of an overspill of colours and branding, it’s also literally a part of The Hive and this results in a plethora of rules and cameras, in line with the “interesting mix of control through surveillance and distraction through entertainment” (Pyyry, 2017, p. 1394) of “surveillance capitalism” (Zuboff, 2019). From my seated vantage point I can see a no-smoking sign, a no-cycling sign (both visibly ignored), a no-alcohol sign and a CCTV information sign as well as visible security cameras. I drew these (figure 16) amongst the wildflowers also growing in the area. I balk at hearing a mother explain to her toddler that the camera is there “to protect us”. I experience a serious mix of feelings from this. On the one hand The Hive has so much to offer children, and its security obsession is no worse than any other place, but on the other, that sanitisation is oppositional to free unencumbered engagement. That Zuboff discusses surveillance capitalism through the metaphor of a “hive life” is an ironic coincidence but much of what she describes rings true in this context. Here, “security” has become an antagonism to “sanctuary” without which, she argues, key creative processes contingent on privacy, intimacy, and risk become impossible. That the mother bats away the child’s genuine curiosity about why cameras are normal in such a way demonstrates the extent to which surveillance has become banal (Berlant, 2011, pp. 239–240).

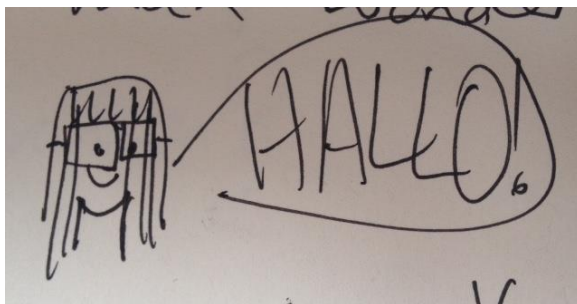
Pointing to this boundary space was important for contextualising what happens inside and the playing out of some of the broader themes of worth, classification and managed engagement in public space. I am reminded again of Alan Bennett’s feeling that “a library...was like a cocktail party with everybody standing with their back to me; I could not find a way in (Bennett, 2011, p. 3). As he makes vivid, the edge of the library is an area where judgements and insecurities allow or deny comfort and belonging.

## Into the building



**FIGURE 17**

Broaching the double doorway and stepping into the building, the first thing to greet anyone entering The Hive is a carefully managed series of impressions by volunteers and staff (Figure 17). The entrance level, level one, is usually quite sparse and is overwhelmingly populated by Hive personnel of different types. Temporary book displays sit in front of the lifts – Veganuary, Mother’s Day, Christmas – and exhibitions often fill the larger space at the bottom of the building’s central atrium. Though generally mild and popular topics it’s likely that some of these displays turn off some as much as they appeal to others. The smiling successful faces of chefs, fitness experts, mothers, present a version of reality that is comfortable and joyful, where the choices that need to be made aren’t of survival.



**FIGURE 18**

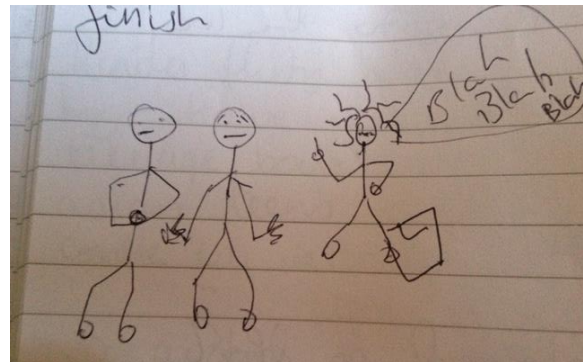
Upon entering, different staff members greet me at several points, and I almost feel this is a bit of an assault course. The slightly forced conviviality of the hellos is in keeping with the emotional labour of the roving style of work favoured by the management, as discussed in chapter five.

This human contact seems to mean a lot to some people entering The Hive, but it occasionally falls quite flat, and I wonder if the staff ever truly want any kind of free, genuine engagement. If they did, they’d need to be open to the less friendly sides of life, and not just the sanitised “hellos” offered. I feel a bit guilty for finding it funny when I observe one male visitor to the building look completely confused and quite perturbed by the staff member who greets him enthusiastically and asks how he is. He ends up saying “ok thanks...how are you...?” and it’s then her turn to look confused and perturbed – clearly not expecting an ongoing exchange,



maybe mentally wondering, “what *am* I doing?”. On another occasion, a man takes up the offer of conversation and chats to a staff member about his extended family history for ten minutes to the extent that the staff member ends up getting the unpaid volunteer to take over under the guise of, “ah, I think James might be able to help you...” (Figure 19).

It’s significant that staff of different standings and positions dominate this area, and the varying levels of the worth attributed to them through pay and position matter. It isn’t visible to the general public what position Hive staff have since all front-of-house members wear identical black clothing, but I know from my meetings and interviews with them at least some of the volunteers and apprentices are working these meet-and-greet roles. Although it was quite light and funny, there was significance in the fact that, in the



**FIGURE 19**

scenario I just described, it was the unpaid volunteer who was expected to pick up the conversation when the paid member of staff tired of it. The paid staff could legitimately claim to need to do other things, but there’s also an impression that this managed friendly experience must only go so far for those more highly remunerated. This is ultimately a power issue, and it has a darker side. Jessica, the apprentice member of staff I introduced in chapter five is often on this meet-and-greet duty and I get to know her quite well. She tells me she was once followed from the building and part of the way home by a man she’d had a conversation with as part of her job. That beginning an exchange with a man as a young woman comes with genuine risk is not reflected in the way those jobs are treated – in other words, this emotional work is given to un and low paid staff.

The third layer of staff type in this open entrance space is that of security, who stand in front of the children’s library which is at the back on the floor, directly opposite the entrance. They are a group of about 5 or 6, but there tends to be two or three on duty at any time. Race and class figure hugely among the group. From my observations, only two are white - one is south Asian, three are black - they’re all men, and they are employed by Bellrock, the outsourcing company mentioned in chapter four, rather than in-house by The Hive. I feel uncomfortable that in a building so overwhelmingly occupied by white people – especially library staff - the security staff is so racially skewed. Sartorially, security staff are differentiated from the usual

black Hive uniform by the reinforced fabric of their clothes, the security company logo, the fluorescent armband designating their official security credentials.

The security staff are the embodiment of the less conspicuous but strongly felt sense of surveillance of the frontier space outside. They are symbolic of the hard apex at the top of a building which, as I'll explore in the next section, functions around a silent but pervasive management of behaviours and expectations. I only see security approach people in an act of engagement once or twice, and on no occasions in a physical or even dramatically confrontational way. One such example also illustrates the permeability of the boundary space populating the entrance:

*"On a weekday afternoon in September three security guards come out, this time one is the old white guy (grey, glasses, tough but wiry look...as though he's in charge), the Asian guy, and the young black one. The Asian guy tells the black guy to walk around the building, and gestures to the areas that youths congregate. A female community support worker joins them, and they all chat in a friendly manner while casting around with quite smug accusation. A brief power play takes place. A teenage guy on a bike cycles very close to the doorway of The Hive, beckoning to someone within the library itself to come out - a friend. Both lads look at the collected security guards and CSW who look back at them. Security have studied calmness in their gaze, which looks like arrogance, but I sense they're also silently willing their presence alone to be enough to get the boys to behave as they want. The one lad on foot mock punches the other one who has now exited the library, clearly for show, they are looking back at the guards the whole time, jostling each other. The lads move away. The guards scoff a bit, posturing, but I think lads won. It was a short show, but they showed the security guards to be unwilling to act as boldly as the lads themselves did." (Reflection)*

Back inside The Hive, and from this ground floor the rest of the building can be taken in with one glance and the floors are described painted on the wall near the café in this way:

Level 4 – Research, quiet study

Level 3 – Read, learn, imagine

Level 2 – Explore the past

Level 1 – Discover

## Level 0 – Shared study

The list is a strange mix of instruction and description, with the fact that the building is primarily a library completely obscured. It is quite common nowadays for library managers to choose terms other than “library”, and it is true that beneath these subheadings are more descriptions that make it clearer what is on offer. However, thinking back to the frontier space behind, the abstract ways that “library” and “archive” are described could create an additional barrier to some less accustomed to The Hive. This can also be pleasant though, a rethinking of bland categories: I overhear a man wheeling his aged dad’s wheelchair and reading from the list before asking, “so what do you want to do? Explore the past? Read, learn, imagine?”. The old man understandably seemed a bit confused by the prospect, but because he had company and his son to talk to, quite pleasantly so.

But the slightly confused manner of these descriptions corroborated some of the other impressions I got of the management’s priorities. That the basement level area on floor 0 is blandly termed “Shared Study” evokes the lack of confidence that the area itself presented to me. In contrast to the colourful, purpose-built, exciting space of the children’s library above it, or the busy and varied curation of the third-floor main library, the lower ground area is sparse and cold. The main book collection is Young Adult fiction and the space is predominantly used by teenagers, so I initially term it the “teen area” despite not explicitly being acknowledged as such by The Hive. Observing this area with an eye on its daily rhythms proved pertinent as the predominant crowd changed with the end of the school or college day: teenagers in their own clothes gave way to groups socialising and studying in school uniforms.

Over time, however, it became more accurate for me to see “the teen area” as the “leftover” or “overflow” space. The fact it was here on floor 0 that the dwindling CD/DVD collection was placed was indicative of it feeling like a bit of an afterthought. But it is also the space where “job club” – the weekly event where computers are given over to unemployed people needing assistance applying for work – took place. Though probably not the intention, that teenagers and unemployed adults had to go literally underground, to the furthest away point from the third-floor main library – limiting the likelihood they might serendipitously move on into the library – felt apposite and often depressing.

This area was identified in interviews with staff as a work in progress and it brings to a head the mixed feelings about what and who The Hive is for, in the wider context of stretched

public services and non-existent public spaces. Claire, a manager, tells me that initially the space was very popular but that this had been a problem:

*“...so the idea was it would be a noisier space, and that it was also going to be for young people, it would be for teenagers, so teenage books were down there, the furniture was funkier...but we hadn't really thought through what that meant, in terms of the numbers of young people who might be using it, and for what purpose they might be using it, so whilst in an ideal world we might say, absolutely - not even just an ideal world, in any world - we want lots of young people using us. But... if they're using you with no particular purpose, if they're not using you to study or if they're not using you for borrowing books or reading then they're using you just to hang out... there's nothing wrong with that, that's fine, but how do you manage that, and how do you...you know they get bored as well” (Claire, Manager, Interview).*

Claire struggles around clearly not wanting to say that The Hive had to consciously and proactively make the space less appealing to the many and disorderly young people who were attracted to it. That is not her belief, and she is keen to stress that libraries have a diversity of purposes. It is key that she goes on to say “there was definitely a strong sense from the board that it shouldn't become a youth centre. It's a library”. This idea that “it's a library” is both hard-line and definitive sounding, while also being totally meaningless and, I think, illustrative of societal fears about young people congregating. That teenage students at the university are taking up space upstairs in the main library is not seen as a problem in the same way, and nor is the very noisy use of the children's library upstairs. “It's a library” does not negate the need for toddlers to sing together, but “it's a library” does mean teens without books out are dangerous.

Saying this is not to pass judgement on The Hive – the library management shouldn't be in the position they are in where they're one of the only places left for teenagers to go. Saying so is more just to shed light on the way the building's mixed nature creates mixed messages and highlights wider societal assumptions about the value and acceptability of different bodies.

This walk-through of the entrance area and first floor of The Hive is intended not only to give a visual impression of the building, but also to begin to illustrate how the built environment interacts with varying and sometimes conflicting expectations of the space. Having done so, the following sections dwell on the third floor. Although much more could be said about the

rest of the building's areas, the third floor is where the integration project truly extends into knowledge as well as communities, and as such is the site of the most intricate boundary work and classificatory practices that are pertinent to my research.

### Level Three: plaster and archives



FIGURE 20

Rachel Whiteread's<sup>7</sup> plaster casts of lost spaces and objects – sheds, light switches, chair undersides, and so on - focus on the solid states of in betweenness, connection and negations among and around objects. With the plaster, she accentuates what the object displaces with its presence, the spaces touched by its existence. Whiteread describes her process of plaster casting as “mummifying the air in the room” (Whiteread, 2014), preserving – honouring? – lost spaces, the spaces made among objects, spaces that become home to encounters, the life of the library. The plaster used to swell into the objects' gaps has bubbles, permeability and a softness at odds with its solidity. I see this paradox as a kind of reminder that space

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<sup>7</sup> *Holocaust Monument* (2000) aka 'nameless library' CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=480349>

and the affective encounters it enables is never fixed, flat, neutral or consistent; it is always in conversation with what is around it, and each can echo into the other.

At the same time as being all about the negative space, the casts call for fresh attention to be paid to the object or objects enclosed. Seeing the objects not quite as we expect to – seeing everything but the object we expect to see – shakes us out of preconceiving them and rendering them predictable, static, individuated. Sensing anew the negative space of the object against its edges, forces fresh engagement with objects we presume to know.

The metaphorical charge of the library as an idea as much as an institution is strong. As such, visualising a Whiteread-ian pouring of plaster into the shell of the shelves of The Hive demanded I look again and look closely at the library infrastructure (Mattern, 2014). Narrowing my view to the level of spines and shelves felt necessary from a methodological perspective. Taking the space of The Hive “as read” risked bundling up common conceptions of “the library” with it. However unwieldy and inconsistent they are in actuality – and The Hive certainly is – the idea of “the library” as something with a core of consistent history, a folklore, a “cultural poetic” (Stewart, 2014, p. 550) remains powerful. Derrida’s discussion of “a library” in Hélène Cixous’s novel “Manhattan” speaks to the slippage between particular libraries and the “allegory” of the “absolute library”:

*“[the forward to the novel begins] in a library. In the Library. With a capital L. This Manhattan Library finds itself then written, erected, monumentalised, capital-letterised. It figures the allegory of the absolute Library” (Derrida, 2003, p. 12).*

Though a distinction is being made here between “a library” and “the library”, the point that one evokes the other is pertinent to why I turned to the space and its micro level encounters in close quarters. Doing so is not only about seeing the space as particular and special, but it is also about paying attention to The Hive’s particularities, and not taking the library as Any Library we feel we automatically know.

As such, in what follows I turn to the micro life of The Hive, its uniqueness and its connections with shared understandings of its status as a library, a public space. Whiteread’s casts guide my thinking here in several ways. Firstly, her focus on the materiality of space encourages me to dwell on and in the way the space of The Hive is made and remade by pre and sub conscious decisions and movements. The permeability of the plaster and its relationship in the room is evocative of the space of The Hive relying on the presence of books, of facilitating encounters around books. Thinking about filling this space between shelves is done in the



first instance as an attempt to, like Whiteread, “make in-between spaces visible”, to dwell on how “ordinary objects occupy space in relation to their surroundings” (Wood, 2005, p. 27). For The Hive, this is shelves of books. Though we will see the many ways that life in The Hive is about many things beyond reading, I explore how the architecture of books and shelving is a constant feature, backdrop, mediator of behaviour and interactions. Chartier’s belief that “reading is always a practice embodied in acts, spaces, and habits” (Chartier, 1992, p. 3) rings true even in a space where library activity might mean browsing, dwelling, gaming. Exploring the natures of that space brings me closer to those acts and habits, to what is circumscribed by them, and what is able to flow over them.

Secondly, after having looked at the layout of the library, the arrangements of the shelves of books and their affects as objects and architectures, I look to the spaces the plaster seeps into: the archive of the library. Here, I’m going to the shelf’s objects, the representation of their knowledges on display, their interfaces with one another, their interfaces with the space around them. Again, Derrida’s (2003) interest in these permeable meetings of matter and their surroundings bleed into my plaster thinking: “there are so many uncertainties or aporias for whoever claims to set a library’s contents in order, between the library and what’s outside it, the book and the non-book, literature and its others, the archivable and the non-archivable” (p. 18). While the plaster analogy possibly meets its limit here – I’m uncovering the blanket block of plaster, of books, as the blocks wouldn’t - Whiteread still has relevance. The plaster thinking is about boundaries, frontiers, their permeability, what becomes possible between the “book and the non-book”. The soft chalkiness still sits among the micro meetings – the micro encounters that are borne between the books, the rubbing up of communities and knowledges.

Within the shelves then, I read The Hive as an archive, and draw on unconventional and affective readings of archive. This harks back to the literature review’s discussion of the library as generative classificatory space. Going among and within the architecture of shelves, I explore a reading of “the archive” in order to understand the conditions for knowledge making and becoming in The Hive’s integrated library. Archive reading focuses on the generative nature of collected books, their accidental order, and what the way the converging publics using them in this building interact with them tell us about the integration’s success. Just as plaster-thinking disorients my learned impression of the library and its rules, applying concepts of archives to the inner parts of the library – its collections and the people around them – forces fresh engagement with the books. As an archive, they become artefacts

which communicate the decisions that went into them and are backdrops to the encounters happening among them.

### Plaster/shelves/layout

I think initially of the shelves of books as performing a completeness. In the same way as a plaster cast would cast a block, rather than a whole series of books, the shelves of books enclose a collection which can suggest false comprehensiveness. This completeness is a performance in the sense that although the shelves are finite, the knowledge and expression they contain are not; they could be infinitely bigger, could contain completely different books. Sensing the overall look of a block of books breaking up the space of the library floor was an important reminder of their power and presence in the space, their continuing importance to the idea of the library despite being seen by some as redundant in the digital age.

The main book library of the third floor has different types of collections filling its space. Rows of shelving are collected in groups in different corners of the floor but these never appear as a compression of high, closely packed stacks. Though taller than head height, the shelves here don't feel overpowering: their whiteness and the spacious width between them isn't domineering. In contrast to visions of libraries like the British Library's King's collection where the multitude of books serves an overwhelming aesthetic – of history and hierarchies of knowledge as much as a practical storage - here, the banks of books are deliberately malleable. The shelves purport to enclose books, suggest completeness; produce and project boundaries, edges. They are used as walls, barricades, displays.

On most banks of shelves on this floor there is a small section where a rotated piece of shelving allows a few books to be laid flat, rather than stacked on their sides; to change the view from spines to the book's front-cover. Through these front facing shelves there is an acknowledgement that the shelf is there not only as storage but as advertisement, that there is the capacity to explore and be enticed by book covers unexpectedly, that perhaps there are exemplars of a particular subject for the unassuming browser. The "New In" section that is the first section to be seen at the top of the stairs, leading into the library space, is all front facing and is clearly intended to excite serendipitous browsing.





Every four or five rows – which are themselves short – another collection, of furniture, breaks up the block of books. Desks intersperse some, and clusters of low, cushioned seats and sofas with mini tables sit between others. There are a few barstool-style seats with mini writing surfaces attached which I never see used. Otherwise, all these desks are for people to share. There is a predictability about which furniture goes where – soft seats and low mini tables intersperse fiction, crafts, cookery, health, where desks dominate around sociology, psychology, education, politics, geography. Staff explain this variety according to demands for various uses, with ideas of spatial and sonic organisation in connection. Susan says: “Some people like a little background noise, and some people like silent study...which is as it should be” (Susan, ALL, Interview). Although throughout there has been deliberate attempts by Hive management to make the space seem approachable to all, the organisation of space provides a context for behavioural expectation which can still mean people will internalise differing messages of welcome and off limits.

The large History section area of the library shows the integration project playing out in space. Interspersed in among the shelves are circular tables that suggest more casual behaviour than the studious square tables on the other side of the floor. There are also several sofas along another side of the wall, and low single seats between others. As we know, History is the subject area in which there is most overlap in borrowing publics: university and non-university going members of the library both use it heavily. The mingling of seating options available here reflect this, but perhaps have also come to encourage it where other subject areas haven't. Having these differing engagement options, and the lack of them in other “academic” areas make these expectations inevitable – how could these spaces be engaged with any other way now?

Activities are somewhat circumscribed by the tone that is set by the space, which at The Hive is made up by the collections and by the furniture chosen. Lefebvre's belief that “activity in a space is restricted by that space, space ‘decides’ what actually may occur (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 143). An assessment of the activity the space is required for has been made by Hive management, people using the space adapt it, and back again. The desk heavy format of the sociology section (Dewey Decimal 305) is set up for a different type of inhabiting than the sofas of fiction. It is hard to study on coffee tables, hard to feel comfortable, but it is easy on desks. Desks also necessitate at least a willingness to share space with strangers. In her evocative examination of feeling “at home” with her writing table Ahmed (2006, p. 11)

highlights the personal, bodily loosening that needs to happen to feel comfortable and able to be productive: “home is not about being fixed into a place, but rather it is about becoming part of a space where one has expanded one’s body, saturating the space with bodily matter”. The desire to be alone in this perhaps explains the reticence of library users to sit next to each other unless it becomes necessary. I observe while working at a desk on my own among others in the 305 section that often people will walk to the area, observe the lack of totally empty tables, and leave, as though it’s “full” despite there being so many seats free.

### Privacy/publicness/power

Space and activity in The Hive plays with levels and expectations of silence. The presence of these architectural shelves interacts with the enduring expectations of sound and secrecy that are associated with libraries. For some at The Hive, behaviour gets adapted towards a mistaken belief the books are sound barriers, while others cling to notions of silence and self-isolation in the space. Observing moments where these differences rub up against one another is revealing of the different notions that are held about privacy and publicness in an open space like The Hive. In some cases, deeply personal conversations are held in the bookshelf enclosures. I hear one man on the phone explaining why he was behind on a rent payment, and another pair looking up the times for the homeless shelter nearby - for all around them to hear. I don’t always hear such sensitive topics but doing so is deeply affecting both in terms of the content – hearing how hard people’s lives are – and the fact that they are either unaware or past caring that they can be heard. I’ve reflected on examples of both, or even a strange mix of unawareness and troubled uncaring. That this affects me emotionally also says something about the subjective values placed on privacy – it could be that neither lack of awareness nor overflowing emotion is at root, but merely a different perception of the public/private divide. That it makes me feel uncomfortable to hear these conversations additionally speaks to a[n, also uncomfortable] middle class sensibility that values privacy, particularly about money. I’m guiltily reminded that there might even be an element of Žižek’s (1997, p. 45) “Love thy neighbour? No thanks!” to my initial aversions.

But these aversions are hard to sustain in the public library since they repeat and spread across the space intermittently. In my research diary I describe a tense interlude in my day which was indicative of this blurred mixture, the discomforting affect it had on those around us, and The Hive staff’s close surveillance of the situation:

*There’s a man out of sight – behind the bookshelf by my desk - singing very loudly to himself, in a strange intermittent, jarring and tuneless, way. “now*

*now, let me love you, now let me love you... never give up now.” I exchange eye contact with all the ‘Jack Wills’ students around me (so-labelled by me because they were identically clad in casual sportswear), but no one does anything. Earphones are put in and adjusted. I wonder if he might be drunk but then wonder if it’s an uncontrollable tic or something. After the singing he shouts repeated phrases: “there you go kids, there you go kids, there you go”... “fucks sake man, fucks sake man.” He coughs and clears his throat in what sounds like a performance. I feel tense and think about the behaviour strategy of The Hive, how this might get resolved. Five minutes pass, when I see one female member of staff nervously walking towards the area the noise is coming from. She stops near me and I know she can see the man, but he can’t see her. She waits there and doesn’t go further. Then, another member of staff – an older woman I’ve seen acting authoritatively in the “teenager” section – comes from another angle and they walk towards the area together.*

*In a pretty surreal turnaround, the pair go to him and whisper what I guess must be a request for the man to quieten down, and his response is to loudly say “Oh of course, I’m so sorry, sorry about that, sorry”, in a calm and clear voice. He’s silent now. (Research Diary reflection)*



**FIGURE 22**

This exchange seemed to me to be a window into the ways that ideas of privacy and publicness sit in relation with feelings of power, expectations and norms. Nippert-Eng (2010, p. 10) calls the “strategies, principles and practices” used to “create, maintain and modify cultural categories”

“boundary work” and this episode felt like a loud playing out of the boundary work of The Hive for all involved. The man making the noise makes an assessment about overstepping a boundary and being louder than everyone else; perhaps he really isn’t aware, can’t control it, doesn’t care, thinks no one will ask him to be quiet. The “Jack Wills” students (Figure 22) and I all displayed an unwillingness to engage with him: maybe out of awkwardness, a bit of

fear, laziness, an expectation that it was someone else's job to sort it out. But there's a clearly shared agreement that it was an "it" – an episode where our agendas have been derailed by a disruption of norms. As Stewart puts it after an episode of drama in her book "Ordinary Affects",

*It's as if the singularity of the event has shaken things up, lightening the load of personal preoccupations and social ruts...A "we" of sorts opens in the room, charging the social with lines of the potential (Stewart, 2007, p. 11)*

The library workers – despite there being no declared rule about noise expectations anywhere in The Hive except for the silent fourth floor – share a feeling too that something has been overstepped, and display some trepidation before dealing with the situation, sure that it was the right thing to do. The fact that the man is so amenable and appears so surprised to have been told he is disturbing people is an additional twist – was he trying it on, perceiving correctly that we around him were too awkward to quieten him, or was he really not aware? - and underlined the overall expectations of the building's quietness being observed.

This episode plays out again and again in The Hive, in different levels of severity, and it is inevitable in the space where communities and expectations have felt friction and changing lines of division and classification. Nippert-Eng (2010, p. 165) again describes these derailments whereby societal norms come into conflict and one person's "private" spills into someone else's. People like the man disturbing an otherwise studious area demonstrates "that they do indeed have power over those around them, no matter how fleeting" (p. 165). Although she acknowledges its fleeting nature, her overwhelming emphasis in that section is about the power held by people described by her research participants as "self-centred" and "ill mannered" (p213). For me though, episodes of overstepping silently agreed norms always felt ultimately powerless for those involved. The interruptions like these at The Hive are quite painful to encounter – a man concealing the fact he's drinking from a bottle of wine, another with empty chairs left around him because of body odour, a man walking through the shelving pulling books off to dramatically thumb through then discard, muttering "cunt" - the power they have by violating others is incredibly hollow, and often not deliberate.

These episodes are only episodes because they punctuate norms. Libraries, as "The Library", provoke the cliched expectation of shhing and silence, but The Hive is designed in such a way that silence is both impossible while still seeming at times desirable or feasible – in the book enclosures. This creates a conflict of expectations, for those using the space but also for

the staff. Not only is the building built around a large, open, central staircase, but the bookshelves are short and malleable, not sealed to the edges of the room, so there's a manufactured openness which carries sound. The constant bustle is commented upon by staff and users:

*S: I don't think students really expect a really really quiet space...in my experience, they don't expect the library to be quiet. They expect it to be a bustling space where they can meet, but also, if they want a quiet space, they can find it. And that's a good thing I think. I don't think you get many very quiet libraries. If anything, that expectation comes from the public.*

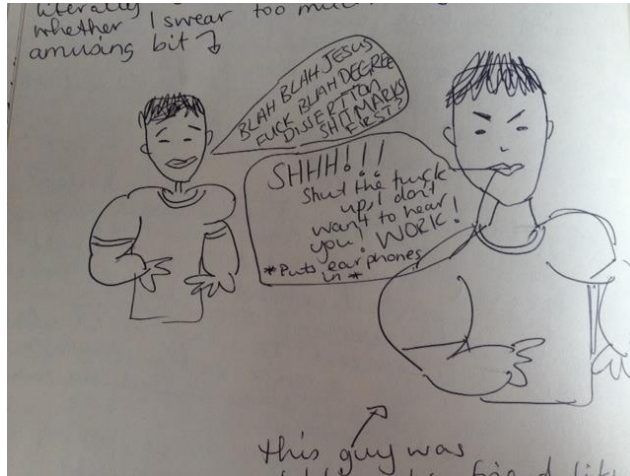
*KQ: Yeah, I have seen a few "shh! It's a library" from people, and thought "..."  
[makes quizzical face]*

*S: like "yeah? And? Have you seen the great big hole in the floor? [The Atrium] kind of carries the noise..." It's interesting, it's a very open design, but sometimes you think it doesn't really lend itself to be a library design. Everything's quite noisy, except for at the very top. Depending on the time of the year or what time of day it is. It's like with "bounce and rhyme" [the toddler activity that involves singing on the ground floor], if you're sat on level 3 studying, you are going to hear "the wheels on the bus" (Susan, ALL, Interview)*

Again, Nippert-Eng's "boundary work" is evident here, especially between the public and the student library users. An internal conflict takes place between the feeling that libraries shouldn't be a "really, really quiet space", while at the same time a belief that the level of noise allowed to circulate is inappropriate – "it doesn't really lend itself to be a library design." Like the teenage area on floor 0, It isn't just about the noise; it matters who is making it, what they're doing with it. While I've seen older children and men – almost always men - such as the one above either shh-ed or ushered out of the library, I have not seen the same happen to the many groups of students also present. And it is not the case that male groups of students aren't also behaving in problematic ways. I am roundly and amusedly ignored when I tell two young men I share a table with that the way they are loudly discussing their friend's girlfriend's body is offensive. In less close contact, groups of students often socialise loudly and in a self-entitled manner in the space without me ever seeing them told to be quiet by staff. In this sense, the disciplining of the kind of bullish masculinity evident here is also cut



through with questions of class, and who is deemed worthy of the space, and who feels confident in the space.



**FIGURE 23**

Observing how the numbers and arrangements of different groups of students ebbed and flowed over the course of an academic year was illuminating in terms of how valuable The Hive seemed to be for them as a social space, rather than as a space holding books. For example, the more studious areas of the library – where desks and non-fiction sit together –

often gave way to loud posturing between university students, many of whom had no books on their desks. I would listen to students comparing the work they'd done, usually more in terms of hours spent in the library than the material of the study. Language was often reminiscent of the workplace, or the gym, with friends telling each other they were “putting a shift in” or “going back to the grind”. They'd commiserate and complain but generally seemed quite happy to be there with each other. In this case, the library was a place where they could be seen to be working overtime, to punctuate their study, and to see their friends. Figure 23 above is an exaggerated version of one such exchange, where one member of the pair was loudly bragging to the other about their recent marks. Hearing one complaining that, on that day, “the library is dead” brought home the evolution of expectations of library space; that it being dead (quiet, empty) might be what others really want and need in a study environment is no longer appropriate if the space is really for socialising.

The small attic style space of the fourth floor above this one is the only space that is entirely silent, and it comes across as somewhat hallowed – physically higher than the rest of the space, but also seen as culturally higher, held in silence. The collections match and contribute to this feeling: the silent fourth floor is where glass padlocked panels go across older leather-bound books. This contrasts sharply with the lighter, malleable shelving of the floor below, and sits in parallel with a change in behavioural expectations. Although the collection is probably used only occasionally, the shelves seem much more orientated towards proscribing

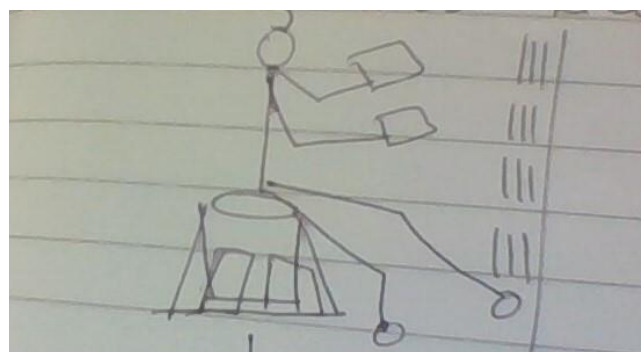
a type of activity and atmosphere akin to a cloistered studiousness or work environment than to serve a function.

## Inside the shelves

As well as being only ineffective sound barriers, bookshelves are also not as solid as the plaster cast block image suggests; they're made of books. Crucially, the shelving is graspable, moveable, malleable. It is reliant on being able to be pulled apart. Shelves are fragile in the sense of being made up from hundreds of removeable objects - books. The tables nestled among the stacks are often within reaching distance of the shelves themselves, and I doodle the way that people sat among the stacks can pull out objects and build up their own mini libraries on their desks. This movement alters the shelf; it overflows into the desk, and into the interactions around the desk. As new books are bought, old books return, others are borrowed, things move; the shelf at my eye line changes over time. Individual books aren't discrete objects, they're creating an impression in their collection with others, and as new books get added, they dilute or sharpen the impression of those around them.

This reading of the shelving highlights to me the constant movements, negotiations, and differences that are intrinsic to libraries, and all classifications. Manguel (2006, p. 163) highlights this feature of libraries as overflowing the order you expect: "Books, even after they have been given a shelf and a number, retain a mobility of their own". A space riven with hard categories and expectations, as well as an institution understood as slow moving and staid, the shelves of a library constantly grow and evolve, shrink and move. This is quite chaotic – since even though rules are being followed, the reality overflows those rules: not only because no classification system is complete and constant (Bowker and Leigh Star, 1999, pp. 10–11) but also because library users can meddle with it at any time. A silent maintenance (Mattern, 2018) by roving staff works to keep it looking still.

As well as the furniture, the shelves work as props for what is always referred to me by staff as "behaviour management". The shelves are complicit. Library staff quietly and inconspicuously preserve and maintain the constancy of the shelved space



**FIGURE 24**



(Figure 24). Ergonomic slanting book trolleys are silently swept between the stacks and borrowed books are interfiled back in their sequence. The noun “shelver” (someone with the job of putting books away in their correct place), and the action of “shelving” is interesting, and indicative of the unique importance of this great object and feature in any library. The job is to keep the shelf intact, maintained, constant – there’s no reference to books, just shelves. As many library services are increasingly doing, The Hive has moved away from the idea of the “shelver” by integrating the task with others, as “roving.” “Rovers” do some shelving, some behaviour management, some on-the-spot enquiry work. Staff on the floor give the appearance of work being leisured – I doodle this member of staff sat on a stool while shelving (fig 25) - while also maintaining a presence in the space. As highlighted in the previous chapter as a key marker between types of library worker, these rovers have access to two desks, but otherwise do their work on the spot, as they move. As well as evoking a shop assistant service style, the roving model also instils expectations among library users of being able to be seen at any time. As such, the maintenance work of shelving becomes even less conspicuous while remaining central to the micro level library functioning.

There is something chaotic behind this maintenance of continuity which belies the increasingly labour-light technologized nature of the library functioning. Sleek, automated, and transparent book return sorting machines and self-checkout booths suggest a smooth restoring of the shelf. However, elements of mess, disorder, and human interference cannot be avoided: the new automation and new work style creates mess in other places for staff without the moniker of professional to clear up. The glass panels of the book returns machine are especially illustrative of this: the transparency of the machine’s casing means borrowers marvel at the drop of their book on the conveyor belt setting off a seemingly magical set of movements to recognise its title, change its status from “on loan” to “available”, and sweep it away to an appropriate pile for re-shelving. The transparency suggests a confident openness, and it was quite common for me to see library users peer round to see their book travel off into the machine after they’d returned them. But it had its limit: machines break, people pull items from shelves and leave them in disordered stacks, and the result remains a pile of books to be manually restored.

This scenario suggests a few things. Firstly, it highlights the limits of any highly organised system like a library infrastructure even when – or especially when – it is hoped to be smooth and predictable. While the automation of aspects of library work has resulted in changed roles for librarians, the removal of a job has not made the need for it go away. It also seemed clear to me that this element of chaos and messiness was welcomed by library users, many

of whom still valued face to face conversations with library workers, and wanted to check out their items in person, and not with a machine.

### Archive – What’s left, where is it?

This idea of shelves as objects that evolve, are privately chaotic, that depend on human error and contact, but which present a wholeness also lends itself to thinking in ways of The Hive in terms of an archive. I now go to the joins, edges and creases of Whiteread’s plaster, to the interface of the shelf itself, and the processes that lead to the interface. The fragility of the shelf exists not only in terms of its intrinsic capacity to be picked apart and remade. In the case of The Hive, the look of the shelf as it changes over time also provides a visual snapshot of the fragility, or health, of the two sides of the library’s integration project.

In the following section I dwell between the shelves and among the books of a particular section of the library, the social science area sat primarily in the Dewey classification mark of 305. This section naturally becomes a home for me. As I have mentioned throughout the preceding chapters, over the year I spend consistently going to The Hive I gravitate to the series of desks sandwiched between shelves at the edge of the building and continue to return to it often in my less regular trips while writing up. It is attractive to me and, presumably, the many other students who choose to be there, because it combines study focused furniture (desks) with a level of conviviality (the desks are shared), is quiet without being silent, and has interesting book collections within eyesight and easy grasp. I begin this section with a vignette based here.

### Vignette: play with books, and silly archives

“20/12/2016

*I’m in 305 and it all seems busier than usual though it must be the student holidays by now. The rumble from downstairs is loud and there’re tons of loud burbling kids and louder grandparents around. The guys on my table all look quite hipsterish, on MacBook’s, with Business Studies books, and one has an LSE Ski Society sticker on his laptop. I guess they are like I would have been – students from other universities “home” in Worcester for the holidays...Quite a gang developing around me, all talking about exams*

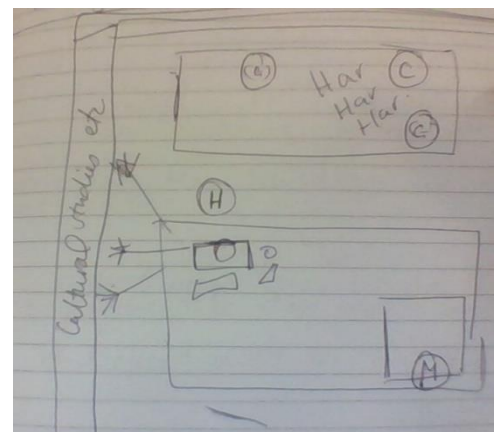


FIGURE 25

*and coursework – kind of awkward, I’m suddenly a bit of a lemon in the middle of them! ... Hipster guy pulls out one book from the shelf enclosing the tables we’re all on, Black Feminist Thought by Patricia Hill Collins, and sticks it in the faces of his friends, saying “woah, bloody hell!”. I feel a bit of dread, feeling like they’re about to take the piss out of it, and not wanting to be there anymore. Thankfully, though they’re laughing and teasing but it seems not to be offensive:*

*“yeah that’s a good one for you!”*

*“why? Are you saying I’m some kind of racist sexist?!”*

*Then a different friend joins in the shelf browsing and pulls out “Chavs” by Owen Jones. More guffawing*

*“Here you go! It’s you!”*

*This goes on for a bit, and the table all enjoy stacking up books. Then the original one, doing business studies at LSE, with the Black Feminism book says:*

*“So many books I want to read...but I never will.... I could do a whole gap year reading this shelf...but I never will....”*

*The guy with the chavs books says “what, you like reading about inequality and feminism do you? Har har har”*

*“like...I loved anthropology...I love this stuff...*

*....*

*...anyway, enough fun and games.” (Reflection and Figure 25)*

This episode illustrates the interactions that take place in The Hive, among books, that overflow expectations of academic libraries. It’s not an episode that could only have happened at The Hive, however elements unique to it led up to this point. The lively and sometimes surprising juxtaposition of books that on first impression look like they wouldn’t belong together, that come from different institutions and were bought with different publics in mind, but which find themselves together under the Dewey Decimal System are the episode’s material. The jumbled nature of integrated collections seemed key in why this

episode of using books to tease came up; the students went between serious academic texts to more popular commentaries and back again. The aesthetics of the bright spines and their closeness to the table, being visible and graspable, and the conviviality of the space – its openness opened possibilities. There's this element of play, some reflection, a social break in study which was spontaneous and brought unexpected relief and humour.

Less comfortably, there's also the illustration of student life in Worcester being more than University of Worcester students, and this brought with it a fractious understanding of race, class, and gender. Like the other interruptions discussed in this chapter, the group was sonically loud and similarly unconcerned by my presence or the fact I was studying. Unlike the others, there was a shared and reinforced confidence that their behaviour wouldn't muster any reaction from staff. Their acceptability in the space was written on their bodies and in their manners; visible membership of institutions more elite than the University of Worcester, jovial intelligence, articulate confidence. The fact that this whole playful episode was predicated on their finding books around class, race, and gender humorous rather than serious – compared perhaps to the business world of their own studies - was revealing too of confidence in their superior sense of legitimacy through academic disciplines. The fact that both different communities and different classes of books rub up against one another in The Hive sometimes seemed to heighten the self-beliefs of one against the other. In the same way that has echoed throughout the lenses of this thesis, the very equality of The Hive, and its bringing into proximity of groups (partners in the PFI, staffing structures, books, publics) seem to make more vivid pre-existing hierarchies and classifications.

That said, the 305 section showed me the exceptional nature of The Hive's natural and chaotic order, the integration, and its accidental questioning of the function of the library to adjudicate on real knowledge. The area covers: "social groups" which includes: Human geography, childhood studies, child development, generation studies, women's studies, feminism, cultural studies, sociology, race politics. Blue stickers denoting "high demand university" books dapple the walls. In contrast to other collections in the library, like Education theory, which are overwhelmingly university bought, or the autobiographies collection, which is overwhelmingly council bought, the 305 section is more patchwork, with items from all perspectives meeting on the shelves.

As such, there are often surprising and discordant elements to be found here. The "gender studies" subsection is particularly fascinating in how books aimed at different registers and for different audiences end up in the same place: I see the Top Gear presenter James May's

“How to land an A330 airbus and other vital skills for the modern man” (305.31/May) sitting alongside an edited academic collection called “Constructing masculinity” (305.31/Ber). “Why men can only do one thing at a time, and women never stop talking” by Allan and Barbara Pease (305.3/Pea) is tantalisingly in the same eye line as “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity” by Judith Butler (305.3/But).

I enjoyed finding these examples. After the initial feeling of disbelief that they would appear together, it felt like a game to see books that almost “answered” the issue raised by the other, as if they were in conversation with each other. Gender stereotyping analysed by the appropriate theoretical deconstruction. The fact that these funny mixtures were unintentional demonstrated the limits of a classification system like Dewey, but in so doing they also prompted productive reflections, engagements, and amusement in just what it was that didn’t look quite right.

On closer investigation, it was not always the case that the “home” communities of books in this area were predictable. Having the blue stickers allowed me to see at first glance which were designated, in a highly visible way, “high demand” by University librarians, but they weren’t the only ‘academic’ books: Silvia Federici’s “Caliban and the witch: women, the body, and primitive accumulation” (305.4094/FED) had a county council sticker inside. This didn’t follow my expectations, and I wonder about how the shelf fixes in place several different time periods. As discussed in chapter four The Hive is really an integration of more than just county council and the current University of Worcester; its collections include some hangovers from the various colleges of Worcester that pre-existed the university, and some of the branch libraries on the public side. Seeing a Marxist-feminist writer like Federici with a county council stamp from a slightly bygone era a few books away from Sandi Toksvig’s book “Girls are best” (305.4/Tok) added a temporal dimension to the integration project, encouraging a reflection on a period where Federici was considered popular reading.

Going back to ideas of the chaos behind the library and behind archiving, this scenario is almost like a send up of the order of classification. By following the rules of classification these books all shared a class mark, but because they don’t share the same register, their sitting together creates a questioning – critical? – energy without really meaning to. As such, The Hive could be said to be disrupting academic standards and questioning unwritten rules in ways that critical scholars and workers have been trying to do theoretically, by chance. For example, Emily Drabinski’s idea of “queering the catalogue” (Drabinski, 2008) not by

“correcting” restrictive – or offensive – categories but by encouraging a suppleness towards the categories themselves seems accidentally to be happening here.

The fact that library classification rules sits high and low theory together encourages a conversation about the nature of high and low theory itself. The bringing together of the groups drawn to them also brings to mind Halberstam’s concept of the “silly archive” (2011). In “The Queer Art of failure” Halberstam uses “low theory” as a way both to mobilise objects in queer history that would otherwise escape “large-scale accounts of alternative formation” (p. 19) and also to question those hierarchies. Halberstam’s “silly” comes from their use of animated films in theory, and it is intentional. They say: “here we can think about low theory as a mode of accessibility, but we might also think about it as a kind of theoretical model that flies below the radar, that is assembled from eccentric texts and examples and that refuses to confirm the hierarchies of knowing that maintain the high in high theory” (p. 16). The purpose for Halberstam is to use “unexpected encounters” between high and low culture to create theory that mediates “the childish and the transformative and the queer” (p. 20). I wonder how The Hive might be contributing to a beneficial destabilising of narrow academic knowledge understandings, while at the same time opening up the possibility for non-university going members of the public to enjoy texts usually not freely available to them. At The Hive the silliness is in the accidental juxtaposition of items – unexpected encounters - that seem not to “belong” but are quite enjoyable to see together and do contribute to new ways of conceiving of a field of knowledge. The incongruity prompts a reaction – it did from me - and a questioning. Seeing the spines of books muddled together might offer “strange” and productive boundary crossings.

The overall discordancy afforded by the integrated collections prompts reflection that challenges such assumptions about quality. Initial reactions might be that the books by May and the Peases should not be there, but I came to love the questions raised, and the fact that they were. I loved watching people pulling books out of the shelves while studying and chuckling at them, allowing them to derail the activity they’d come in for (as with the opening vignette) – I enjoyed reading most of “I’m absolutely fine!: a manual for imperfect women” (a county council book at classmark 305.2442/RIV) while I should have been writing this, for example. Library staff generally shared this feeling:

*“It’s very interesting to see how the collections sit side by side in The Hive, because you do sort of see these texts and think “gosh I wouldn’t have thought they would go together”. But that’s good for the students to see, and*

*the public as well I think. If anything, it's more emphasis on us to develop their information skills...it's a very good way in to having a conversation with the students about "this is a general looking text, does this look academic enough?" You can compare the purposes of texts." (Susan, ALL, Interview)*

It feels important to note, too, that the interfiling of books also resulted in unhappy juxtapositions in other parts of the library. While the 305 section was full of amusing and productive discordancy in very close quarters, other public/academic collections clashed and produced what felt like sad and confusing shelves. For example, there is an enormous swathe of books on one side of the floor which cover dieting and losing weight, at the same location as a range of psychology and educational books covering the damage to mental health done by these very beliefs and practices. These include the horrific sounding "Mad Diet: how your diet can help you lose weight and cure depression" (616.8/LOC), and 106 other results for books with the subject heading "reducing diets". These sit with almost the same class mark as "How to disappear completely: on modern anorexia" (616.85262/OSG). The books on dieting as a positive practice were bought for county council stock, and serve a huge market there, but wouldn't ordinarily be seen in an academic library. Although it makes a depressing sight, the overall fact that people looking for guides to losing weight might be hit with books that instead interrogate dieting culture is perhaps another unintended success for The Hive's own 'silly archive'.

Although the integration of books in this way was popular with staff, and the people using the library, it still brought up less comfortable feelings about worth and the endurance of The Hive project in the longer term. As discussed in chapter four, the totally open access complexion of the bookshelves was contradicted by the differential treatment afforded to university going and non-university going visitors to the library. The blue stickers remind anyone browsing the shelves that there was something different about both the books and them – "high demand" could be interpreted as "off limits". That the blue stickers appear on university bought books as a matter of course rather than after a genuine investigation into the level of "demand" they were in suggested a deliberate attempt to placate those wanting to reinforce gentle divisions within integration. The University Librarian, Linda, explains that this wasn't initially in the original plans for The Hive:

*although we loved this utopian image of 'everyone can have everything', the fact was that students are increasingly paying higher and higher fees and were jolly well going to expect books to be there when they needed them - quite reasonably. So we had to*

*meet a need to [pause], we had to find a way to acknowledge and meet that expectation - and I think probably that right - on behalf of students, whilst trying to remain true to the vision of opening up access to the wider community. So we came up with this pragmatic solution that we would identify the most heavily used parts of our stock, by students, and protect them to a degree. (Linda, Manager, Interview)*

This quotation reveals much more than the “pragmatic solution”. What the blue stickers do – and this is clear in what Linda says – is not that they protect the books that the students need, it’s that they protect the books the students have a perception that they are entitled to. The protection of books is to assuage concerns about the overall hierarchy of publics using the space; that ultimately the students come out on top. The fact that a truly open library is called “utopian” is revealing too. It reminds me of Berlant’s question after being dismissed as “so 1968”, “what nuclear button does the word utopian push?” (Berlant, 1994, p. 125). Linda uses that imagery of naivety on herself – on her project –to distance from it, to confirm the current play of things as the truly sensible one.

Overall, these scenarios of the juxtaposition of high/low, public/academic, blue/not-blue highlight the importance of place and context for validity in the library. The Hive disrupts the markers we’re used to by interfiling collections together, but also disrupts the disruption by adding blue qualifications. Bowker and Leigh Star wittily acknowledge the human intervention and messiness of classification regarding their own book about classification:

*“we would hate to have to assign a Dewey classification number to this book, which straddles sociology, anthropology, history, information systems, and design. Our modest hope is that it won’t find its way onto the fantasy shelves” (Bowker and Leigh Star, 1999, p. xii).*

As well as the partial and interpretative nature of classifying being at odds with its technocratic image, here, they also point to the fact that there are places in the library where they wouldn’t like to be, that wouldn’t “make sense”. Though Fantasy for their work is an extreme example, it points to the importance of belonging and company for knowledge classification. Library classification schemes do more than just group subjects together for ease of retrieval by staff, it’s also validating and contextualising.

In focusing so much on the intricacies of the library shelves, I’m claiming that The Hive’s special arrangement is indicative of the whole project. At large, it is an “arrangement” with both multifaceted and often unexpected and unintended outcomes in terms of community



and knowledge meetings. Activities are suggestively circumscribed in certain areas, and these are often interlinked with negotiations around shared assumptions of value and worth. It's a space that reproduced expectations of civility in some ways – space, sound, placings of material, behaviour management. But among that, and in more important ways, it's also a space that has liberating aspects, both deliberate and inadvertent. Again, rising from the space, the discordant books meeting can be joyful or challenging.

### **Enchantment and boundary crossings at The Hive's "Sun seat"**

In this final section of the chapter I focus in more closely on the interpersonal encounters made possible in the spaces and circumstances described in the previous two sections. At the granular level, these moments speak to the enchanting possibilities of The Hive, even - and especially - in spite of the negative aspects it also holds. In a broader sense, dwelling here connects The Hive to public spaces in general at a time where, as Bennett puts it, "the prospects for loving life – or saying yes to the world – are not good" (2001, p. 4). Though The Hive context isn't the "cause" of the uplifting encounters I describe, that encounters like these spill out of the built environment of the space in ways pertinent to the project itself is significant. As a space that is a necessity for some and a choice for others, The Hive enables encounters like no other, and its managed surface sometimes gives way to joyful affective experiences.

I choose to end the chapter with an extended vignette exploring enchantment and "ordinary empathy" as an unintended possible outcome of The Hive, and the project's primary success. In addressing these themes, the approaches of literary and affect theorists Kathleen Stewart, Lauren Berlant and Ann Cvetkovich are central. Building on many of the themes already summarised in the chapter, in this vignette I home in on the library floor as an affective public space that is intimate without intention, and where boundary crossing is emotional and has managed risk. These moments of interaction change the solitary flows of lives because the people living them just happen to be there and are forced into contact with one another. Without causing a scene, meetings described here between people in the library demonstrate a willingness to share and belong - sometimes, for a bit. Much like unintended learning experiences afforded by The Hive's "silly archive" discussed above, this public space is not conscious: the pragmatism of the overall project just "is"; it's not a public asking for membership, and these encounters and enchantments are fleeting and come by chance. In that sense I'm inspired by Cvetkovich's work on "public feelings" and on "finding public

forums for everyday feelings” (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 2). The Hive facilitates a haphazard public beyond what it bargained for.

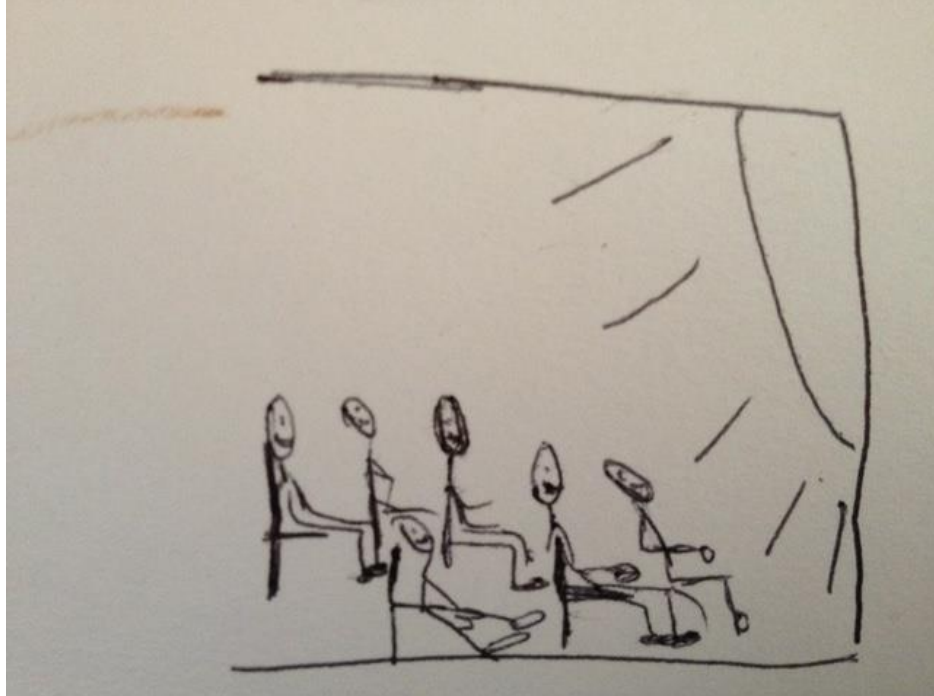
The encounters described below came about unexpectedly as experiences in which everyday connections briefly give way to a new way of knowing and relating. Though both occurred spontaneously, they helped me to think about empathy as a valuable feature of public life, and a source of ‘success’ for The Hive. As I discussed in chapter three with reference to my encounter with Sue, on one level I consider empathy as an embodied practice which is essential to the establishing of “pedagogical spaces of enchantment” (Pryor, 2017). Encounters between individuals across difference necessitate both engaged parties to step out of their habituated experience and into an unknown, emergent space. Such affective experiences – which I find in the library space through spoken exchanges, gestures, shared silences – can be risk-laden (hooks, 1994, p. 4), and I suggest that this moment of willing vulnerability constitutes an educative empathy that has a potentiality for becoming and wonder (Ahmed, 2014, p178). By the same token, borrowing from Stewart’s “ordinary affects” (2007), “ordinary empathy” points to the fact that these moments may be highly mundane and pass without articulated notice. Like Stewart, I argue for attention nevertheless to be paid to the emotional charge such empathetic exchanges add to everyday life.

### Building space and experiencing others

*I begin coming to a seating area on the third floor of the library every lunch time quite early in my fieldwork. I felt my way there. The soft grey and yellow carpet of the area marks a subtle shift from the starker and more serious black, white, and red edges of the rest of the main library floor. The space acts as a bridging place: between the fiction and non-fiction sequence, inside and outside, study and leisure, university and public, belonging and not belonging. In this bridging, the “sunseat” optimises the messy integration of systems of knowledge and social life brought about in The Hive. Few encounters bubble into meetings of huge note, but bodies and feelings are immersed and contingent; they invite and refuse one another in sometimes poignant ways.*

*A floor to ceiling window of about ten metres width provides a soft and permeable gate between the library and the scene beyond, and I begin to call the area the “sunseat” in shorthand early on in my research diary because of the relationship people drawn to this area have towards this window. I didn’t call it the “sunseat” because the sun is blazing in and dominating the scene – obviously that’s rare. But*

*the area became the “sunseat” to me because of the softly drawing effect it has on the people who arrive and sometimes join each other there, physically turning their bodies, the incline of their faces, towards a soft and undominating light.*



**FIGURE 26**

*When I draw the area, I accentuate the processes: bodies homogenise into stick men uniformly smiling to the sun, postures are easy, slouchy, the sun itself is large and has come within the building. The simplicity of the doodle reflects the simplicity of the pleasure found in the scene, unexpected pleasures, almost a little stoned, between books and hills (Figure 26).*

*The “sunseat’s” inbetweenness extends to its relationship with the city of Worcester. It acts as a soft gateway between inside and outside and captures motion and contrast in the view. The view from the window draws attention to the rolling Malvern Hills which outlie and demarcate the city of Worcester. The scene held is one of movement, there’s a river, a road, a footbridge, and pathways all framed by the railway bridge going across the top of the window, bringing people in and out of Worcester. The thick window softens most of the sounds of this movement, though the slowing transit of trains across the bridge as they approach the central station, Foregate Street, punctures the silence at a low rumble. The view and its fluency has a contagious quality and holds people, like a prop to their comfort.*

*In the seated area itself the gathered individuals and groups often pick up and repurpose the furniture to bring their own sense of comfort when possible, angling the seat towards the window. People bring in their own items – laptops, books, phones - and mix them with the library's. They take up temporary ownership of the space and make themselves comfortable – at home?*

*I see an old lady who visits the space on her mobility scooter and brings her lunch – old margarine tubs filled with sandwiches and yoghurt pots with grapes. She scoots in, unpacks in front of the window, eats, and scoots off again. We share occasional smiles, but she's on a mission, daily. There's a sense both of routine and of occasion, something again in-between. Students often break from the more traditionally disciplined and disciplining spaces of the library to join the sunseat for lunch, before returning to their desks. For them this is a break, for others the "sunseat" is the whole event.*

*The space of the "sunseat" and its bridging position encourages encounters between strangers and makes private moments feel shared for many who are open to them. It is in this space that striking up ethnographic interviews often feels effortless. Elsewhere, even elsewhere in the unusual public library, tiny attempts at verbal or even non-verbal connection with strangers is so "outside" that it can feel formidable. Deciding whether to step out of privacy and isolation might not be conscious, but it's often in the back of my mind elsewhere. If I smile with shared amusement at something overheard does that mean I am asking for a prolonged conversation that might lead somewhere awkward? I think of the feeling I got from Patricia Lockwood's description of an awkward event when I attempt a "natural" conversation with strangers outside of the "sunseat": "The act, during a breakfast interview, of picking up a sugar cube and stirring it into your coffee with a little spoon becomes so formidable you do not even attempt it. The sugar cube is the loudest thing in the world; the spoon is monstrous" (Lockwood, 2018).*

*The "sunseat" isn't immune to this risk, but there's somehow often a tacit agreement, encouraged by the tiny decisions allowed by the moveable furniture, and the prop of the window, that suggests that conversation between strangers is (more, usually) permissible here.*

*One day I have a long chat in this area with a partially sighted man called Jack and his dog, Warwick, who tells me he comes to the sun seat most weekdays. He's around*

65 and wears a lot of charity badges, practical clothes, and thick glasses. He tells me he chooses the “sunseat” because of the light, but also brings his own desk lamp to help him see the butterflies he is drawing and colouring. He begins our encounter by asking me what I’m reading, and whether I’m finding it interesting. I explain it’s to do with the elitist foundations of the university and why liberal attempts at “saving it” are short sighted and rose-tinted. I think about how to transpose this to him and feel simultaneously inadequate and patronising. But Jack ponders what I say and begins to tell me about his “other life” in the army. He was never academic he says, and he would have to stand up to the privately educated sergeants who disciplined him, because, he said, they had no common sense.

In spite of the conviviality of this exchange, I remember starting to question after about fifteen minutes how this would end, whether it would ever end. I saw him talking away to another student at the “sunseat” a few days later and initially felt a bit protective of him, hoping this young man would be friendly and open, which he was. The “sunseat” provided a low risk valve for what could have been loneliness, and facilitated unexpected low-level openings.

It was also in the “sunseat” that I finally worked up the gumption to speak with a “regular” I see almost every day. Usually this – again – middle aged man sits at a PC near the third-floor atrium. The atrium itself is surrounded by PCs, and I’m struck by how apparently comfortable people who use those ones are with everyone else being able to see their screens. In always choosing the slightly more secluded booths this “regular” therefore demonstrates a desire for privacy. He has an almost comically grumpy expression, with combed hair and grey short beard. His clothes aren’t scruffy, and his mannerisms are slow and deliberate, but he has a strong smell of old sweat embedded in fabric; I’ve noticed that he often has free seats around him in an otherwise busy area. His expression is unmoving, and he doesn’t interact with people around him.

One day, though, this regular is sat in the “sunseat”, with a book, and I think now is the time to talk to him. He’s such a persistent presence in the Hive this feels the right opportunity; conversations seem more possible and conventional in the “sunseat”; bodies are opened. I come away from the exchange so amused and confused by him; he is, initially at least, a lot friendlier than I expect, and agrees to talk to me. When I ask him how often he comes to The Hive he tells me it’s not often, once or twice a

*week at most, while he's on the way somewhere else. I can barely remember a visit to The Hive where I haven't seen him, any time of day, any day of the week, any time of year. I don't challenge him of course, but his denial of his regularity in – reliance on? – The Hive perhaps suggests an element of shame. After opening up slightly, and bemoaning the noisy public and noisy children being allowed into the library, he flips and says "anyway would you mind, I'd like to get on." As I get up to leave I notice the book he's reading. "Depression for Dummies". The moment is surreal, and almost too apposite and heart-breaking for me to take in.*

Although the exchanges were at an ordinary and everyday level, I believe they made and remade the "sunseat" and the possibility of The Hive in profound ways. Individuals met on "uncommon ground"; my encounters were with people who had ostensibly little in common, but I went away having learnt something in an unusual way. Paul Chatterton uses the term "uncommon ground" to discuss fraught encounters between 'activists' and 'members of the public' at political demonstrations and actions. While this context is different to mine, his description of the encounter resonated with my observations: "while conversations on uncommon ground high-light the entrenched nature of many social roles, possible connections open up by highlighting how they are always emotionally laden, relationally negotiated, hybrid, corporeal and contingent" (Chatterton, 2006, p. 259). As I mentioned, positive outcomes from such interactions can be rare; their connection with self-image, worth, and inclusion make the exchanges open to conflict. Bennett's definition of *enchantment* (Bennett, 2001) includes elements of fear, however, and I think even discomfort in The Hive was sometimes productive in this way: the classificatory nature of the space made meetings awkward and weird sometimes, but that was ultimately a positive and productive thing. Finally, similarly to Chatterton's conclusion, Sharon Todd's evaluation of the "liminality of pedagogical relationships" also implies that this rarity is part of their profundity and relevance to developing a "politics of hope" (Todd, 2014). Focusing on such moments of hope is not to say we should act "as if" the situation is not "deeply structured by social economic and cultural pressure" but rather it necessitates the "recognition that the liminal is not, by definition, the main fare of the day, rather, that the day is configured in light of it" (p. 234).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I take the feature of integration to a micro level, and the style of engagement to the affective. I experience The Hive from book to book and take joy in the unintended production of its profoundly silly archive. It is at the level of this affective lens that the

possibility of The Hive to give space and importance to maligned peoples and knowledge is the most profound. It is here – on the shelves, between the bodies, in the air - that the otherwise carefully *managed* integration project necessarily gives way to chance. While the sadness incurred in this space feels considerable, my overwhelming sense was with the promise rather than the redundancy of maintaining “optimism for [the] optimism” of The Hive (Berlant, 2011, p. 262). In referring back to the exploration of resistance to crises and lateral politics in chapter two, my affective engagement with the rhythms of the library felt as testimony to its accidental role in “reinventing...new idioms of the political, and of belonging itself” (p.262).

It is with these liminal experiences of “the political” firmly in mind that I turn to the concluding chapter of this thesis. After having made visible the overflowing potential of public life through its container at The Hive’s third floor library, I look to the conclusions that can be drawn beyond its walls. Attending to the subtle and easily overlooked micro-expressions of power, exclusion, belonging as they were (re)produced from book to book is revealing of the enduring unpredictability and overdetermination of public space.

## Chapter 7 – Conclusion: The Kaleidoscope of The Hive

*With a week to go before The Big Hand In, I've found myself back at The Hive. I've pulled the chapters together, and feel headed towards conclusions, but nevertheless seem to be committing one of the main ethnographic errors of not knowing when to exit the field. As I leave the house my boyfriend makes me promise not to "go finding anything new!!!". The meaning behind his words is fair enough, and I'm trying to avert my gaze (unsuccessfully) from the new addition of orange stickers that have made their way onto the shelves of floor three among the patchwork of High Demand Blue<sup>8</sup> since my last visit. But finding new things isn't what made me think to visit The Hive again. It isn't that there is a missing piece to a puzzle still to find (there are probably hundreds, and all belonging to wildly different puzzles), or a sense that I need to check-up on things already said in this thesis. I felt like coming again in order to write my conclusion was a way to physically engage with the space as I feel through the lenses, arguments, and open questions of The Hive, to sum up and look forward, while being among books, people, sounds, as I have done so many times before. As I said in chapter three, doing ethnography here at The Hive has afforded what might be a unique opportunity; to write and reflect in the site of the fieldwork. It felt appropriate to visit this site again, right at the end.*

*It is early evening. I came with expectations; University, the railway station I take the train from in Birmingham, was crowded with "freshers" carrying tote bags of free stationery and Domino's pizza vouchers and nerves and relief at what was probably their first day at The University of Birmingham. I had expected the same in Worcester, but in contrast, The Hive feels calm, sparsely populated, even muted, but pleasantly so. The loudest noise from where I am sitting on a window seat facing one of the several vantage points of Kaleidoscope is the sound of the lift doors opening and closing. The window*

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<sup>8</sup>I give in and find out why: The orange stickered books are "short use" items which can exclusively be borrowed by University of Worcester affiliates. In the past these were kept apart from the main sequence and they have now been interfiled. As with so many things at The Hive, this has good and bad connotations: more on the shelving is covered in arguably prohibitive colours. Equally, the general public now at least have browsing access to this material. At this point I feel like The Hive could be encapsulated solely through the bittersweet journey of its book stickers...



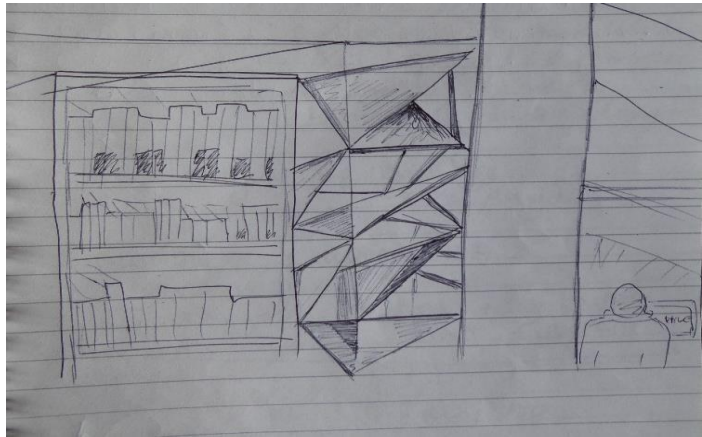
*buzzes into action to open and close smidgen by smidgen in response to minute changes in temperature. When I check my emails, I see a reminder from Warwick University Library that my library books must be returned on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, the same day this thesis is due. It feels apposite to be in this alternative space, The Hive, to reflect on its singularity while simultaneously learning that my own access to academic material ends precisely with the end of my registered affiliation.*

*This evening I notice glimpses of The Hive's promise and its challenges. In the café a child in school uniform eats with a mum in workwear. Near me, a man I assume to be a student reads an article on JSTOR on his own laptop; his neighbour watches golf on a tv streaming service. I see the "regular" from the previous chapter again, like clockwork. I overhear a young male student ask a roving assistant for the latest edition of a Law text, while his friend pulls at a media studies book nearby. As I walk down the atrium steps at half six more school-uniformed kids are streaming in and staking their place in the book nooks. The rhythm of The Hive is low tempo, drawing in the many different parties of this project, this time, without any event. The evening sky gets softly more dramatic in its bright grey light behind building clouds, and it feels quite beautiful. (reflection)*

This thesis began with the premise that public space is important, that it is made up of and in relationship with public goods, and public education, and that it has been undergoing transformation. A decade of austerity and cuts to public library provision has coincided with a radically altered Higher Education sector in Britain. I argued that a project like The Hive, bringing together both concerns as it does, was therefore a site of peculiar sociological interest and insight. As a project borne of a PFI, home to divergent processes of professionalisation, and of publics with specific, overlapping and sometimes contradictory needs, The Hive contains all of this in proximity. Through paying attention to these proximities, via lenses of different foci (institutional, professional, affective), I have argued that light from this singular institution can

be shed on the nature of public space more generally: managing integration, negotiating classification.

It is to this light (and, as with The Hive's Kaleidoscope, also its unavoidable shade) that this concluding chapter turns and in it I do several things. First, I will summarise the findings of my research as it relates to the singular institution of The Hive, referring to its challenges and



**FIGURE 27**

possibilities and summarising the preceding chapters' findings. Here, I look again at the Hive-as-container and sit within its walls, working through how this project lives at the bridging points of professionalisation, privatisation, austerity and political hope.

After dwelling within The Hive's physical boundaries for a final time, I then step out of its doorway, return to its boundary space and look out to the implications of my research for broader conversations. In this second section I turn to three main areas where my research at The Hive contributes insight. Firstly, I return to the live questions of "crisis", both within the sociology of HE and public services. Here, I argue my research contributes to fresh understandings of the interconnectedness of questions of education and public services. I suggest that discussions regarding the institutions of one (e.g. universities) should dwell with their relationships with the other (e.g. libraries). I argue that in so doing, conversations within both sociology of HE and studies into public services will be enriched. Secondly, I reflect on my research's methodological contributions and situate them within the growing field of "live methods." I argue that my slow methodology and use of a "3Ds" approach might develop these artful approaches to the sociological imagination. Finally, I look at the thesis' contribution in terms of developing sociological theory. Here, I reflect on my use of a conceptual framework built around classification and contingent concepts of classificatory practices, boundary crossings, and worth and suggest areas where these have the potential to reach beyond the library. Interspersed across this second substantive section concerning research contributions will be reflections on my role in my research, however the final section of this chapter will turn more explicitly to evaluating the project and looking to further research.

## A container revisited: within the walls

The Hive is a pragmatic institution with a principled vision. In marrying the needs of both the university and the council for new premises, all those involved in the project have produced something which daily (re)creates possibilities beyond the sum of their parts. As they understood from the outset, The Hive management's aim for an *integrated* rather than merely a *joint-use* library brought publics and knowledges into constant negotiation at a time when both public libraries and (public) universities faced various challenges. In this thesis I have explored the myriad components of this integration arguing that, perhaps contrary to expectations, its daily life involves many more classifications than merely "university-going" and "non-university-going" publics. Attending to the slippages of these classifications has been important for reflecting on the changing state and status of elements within public life. Moments where "the university" seemed to become synonymous with "the academic" which seemed to then become synonymous with "more worthy", I suggested, were indicative of the struggle facing those wishing to keep "'learning' and attendant cultural processes of exploration, finding out, thinking, imagining, inventing and knowing" within "the province of all citizens" (Orchardson, 2012).

Pulling into proximity the public, professions, and knowledges of several straightened institutions at times seemed to make the end goal of public space and public education feel less hopeful: in doing so, the cleavages and conflicts between them seem more painful, extreme and unresolvable than ever. Although it is undoubtedly the case that The Hive provides an incredible and enhanced public library service when compared with 'normal' public libraries nationwide, I found that its own integrated nature paradoxically – and unwittingly – sometimes gave way to classifications becoming visible where they might have had no relevance in an "unintegrated" library.

Relatedly, through aiming for a seamlessly and equally integrated organisational culture, the comparative weakness of the public (council, non-academic?) voice vis-a-vis the University seemed at times to give way to an ambivalence about whose reality that was, and whether it mattered. In some instances, I felt that stories of The Hive allowed a view to form that the university was more worthy of the space than the council. The university clearly benefitted from the narrative of its principled gift to the people of Worcester, but it was less clear that the public benefitted from that same narrative. Rather than originating in The Hive, attitudes such as these have much to do with the prevailing political climate around public services, and are revealing of the extent to which these places of learning and sociability have been

moved outside of the realm of “all citizens”. However, in seeking to create a space in which there is “no concept of academic or public” (Dalton, Elkin and Hannaford, 2006, p. 542), but rather totally shared equality, it seems a great challenge for The Hive is in positively inculcating a culture – against the grain of the status quo of siloed private universities – whereby academicness *is public*, or where the public *can be* academic.

As I discussed in chapter four, the fact of The Hive being founded on a PFI is not a side-issue, but rather is intrinsic to the vulnerability and volatility of the project. The obligation of this arrangement on the parties involved has necessitated compromises to be made (in view of shrinking budgets) which I illustrated through the motif of the engulfing blue stickers. Since The Hive is simultaneously operating in a wider context in which public services are cut, public libraries are closed, and universities are in competition, The Hive’s many successes have a just-out-of-reach temporality. Similarly, a volatility around state and status at times permeated the integration of staff, and is illustrative of divergent worths among styles of work in contemporary Britain.

In chapter five I followed this trajectory of the professionalisation of librarianship and argued that classificatory practices were fundamental to maintaining a friction-free integration. An underlying lack of certainty about the worth of librarians in an internet world, and the managerialism (through NPM) that has permeated universities generally and LIS specifically, seemed to encourage a culture of staff necessarily working to prove their worth and continuing relevance. Because different processes of professionalisation sat at interface, the divergent expectations in terms of emotional and embodied labour became starker. Since these are processes now common across British universities (and public services more broadly) – not just in the extreme case of The Hive – the sometimes uncomfortable asymmetries of work and the desire for classifying practices in response is pertinent to broader conversations about work in Britain today. This chapter, again, should not be read as a criticism of The Hive. Rather, looking to the unique experience of The Hive sheds light on some of the ways that the evolution of the profession of librarianship inadvertently works to further differentiate academic from public life.

In chapter six, I explored how classificatory practices permeated at the micro-level and viewed the library as an archive of possibility for the present moment. I explored how the unintended discordancy between books on the shelves provoked a joyful subversion of elite knowledge and how these material collisions happened in conversation with social interactions that shaped the public space. Though undeniably fractious, the dance between

conflict and conviviality was often weighted towards the latter. These moments relate to the power of public feelings as much as public educations and illustrate the enduring potential of public life. The container of collective spaces like The Hive “may not break down [the] axes of division” (Hubbard and Lyon, 2018, p. 938) we know so well, but they nevertheless enable moments of conviviality, empathy, communality to come to take centre stage for a moment, and remind us of the possibility.

The many instances of subtle subversion at the bookshelf – Judith Butler and Jeremy Clarkson, together at last - had material effects on learning experiences. We saw with Sue and her “research”, the students and their play with books, as well as the man seeking out literature on depression, that visibility shapes validity, and interactions borne of the bookshelf highlight the lively potential of libraries as spaces of curated knowledge. The Hive offers a breadth of playful educative possibility in ways it could not have quantified. The liminal experiences of togetherness that bubbled – sometimes, for a moment – above the surface of private emotions that dominate days also matter. As I said at the beginning of this thesis, The Hive is not a panacea for loneliness, but it provides a surface upon which many illustrations of the productiveness of sharing private feelings in public can be celebrated. At a time when students experience unprecedented mental health issues and face uncertain futures, The Hive’s embeddedness within the fullness of its community may well be an enduring example of doing university differently.

### **The container revisited: The Hive’s overflow and contributions**

Having discussed the insights of my thesis as they relate to understanding the life and stories of The Hive, I now turn to part of my original research question concerning what this tells us about the challenges facing public space, public education, and public knowledge. As will hopefully be evident, the line between what findings are related to The Hive in itself and what spills out into broader conversations of public life is blurred; I hope to have shown the slips and blushes from one into the other, and see this feature as an essential contribution of ethnography. That said, I will attempt below to speak more explicitly to the contributions to the literatures my thesis holds in conversation. These begin broadly in mentioning the holding container like quality of my thesis and describing the benefit of this approach to debates within both sociology of HE and public services. I then turn to those literatures specifically, before ending with a reflection on the contributions of my methods and conceptual framework.

As highlighted above, this thesis sheds light on one experiment by a university and library service, and one of its primary contributions is in providing rich and diverse data relating to it. I argued in chapter two that rich description and ethnographic analysis of libraries in the UK was often siloed either within the department of LIS – whose tendency toward business-orientated research was also highlighted – or to shallow and romanticised references within sociological studies of HE. My thesis therefore provides some useful bridging work between two curiously distinct literatures. I bring a sociological sensibility to the field of LIS, treating this institution as a site of shifting affect: emotion, exclusion, belonging. I showed much of LIS literature to be influenced by business orientated literatures and NPM, with very few examples dealing with the rich complexity of life within the university. By approaching the space of the library with plaster thinking and the 3Ds of my slow methods, I reconsidered its vitality as a productive and unpredictable site of education and engagement.

Equally, my ethnographic methodology benefited from the specific perspective and research styles of LIS. Here, the specific knowledge of classification schemes, professionalisation journeys, and institutional histories added insight to the sometimes-offhand remarks about libraries that pepper the scant mentions they tend to get in sociology of HE. Rather than seeing it as a neutral space where university curriculums are engaged with, the insights of critical LIS scholars dealing with classifications and their consequences enriched the observations I made of students and members of the general public negotiating their days in the library.

In bringing the two literatures together I hope to have contributed not only to both, but also to the overarching appeal for the fundamental relevance of libraries to research into the role of universities in public life today.

### **Studying libraries, acknowledging relationships**

My work concerns the library but argues that it should be viewed as a container through which broader processes coalesce, are contained, overflow, and are reparatively addressed in these pages. Much like its position at the intersection of debates within literatures of higher education, public space, public services, and LIS, my work views the library as an institution holding threads that originate and have influence beyond its walls. The ‘capital letterised’ (Derrida, 2003, p.12) library is an institution with well-known histories and folklores, but it is also one that sits within a broader landscape of institutions. These institutions-within-institutions are specific – the university, the county council – but more

importantly they increasingly involve complex and evolving relationships with private providers, outsourcing companies, shifting public opinion, changing political leaderships.

Although I will be extrapolating below the elements of contribution that my work makes in specific debates regarding the “crises” of HE and public services under austerity, my first contribution is to an orientation that views these threads of social life as interconnected and contingent. To understand the consequences of an increasingly privatised higher education system it is essential not only to study the university, but to study the public from which it has arguably retreated. To understand the consequences on public space and public services of ten years of austerity policies it is essential to dwell in the spaces that remain, the spaces that soak up the overspill of cuts, that temporarily accommodate the myriad complexities of lives in varying levels of crisis. My thesis clearly demonstrates the value of doing those things, through rich descriptions of the remaking of space from institutional, professional and affective lenses, in a space which is itself a container for “what remains”.

My ethnography contributes to our understanding of the ways in which these two scenarios – the crisis of HE and public services under austerity - are inextricably linked; rather than simply *accommodating* two separate processes at once, The Hive’s experience illuminates the extent to which these processes of the public should always be considered connectedly. My work - across education and public spaces concerns - develops our understanding that the public itself is shaped not only by structural change, but through live negotiation in response to structural change. This negotiation is emotional, changeable, and focussed around material, symbolic, and internalised classifications. To develop these points in greater specificity I will first turn to the area of studies of crisis in HE where I highlight my ethnography’s contributions in terms of adding subtle complexity to the calls for “public” HE. I then turn to explaining my contribution to our understanding of the “academic” in public. I finally argue that my thesis develops calls for public, progressive HE in highlighting how, given that live negotiations between various social groups shape experience in productive ways, hope can be sought from The Hive for other public engagement activities.

### Sociology of HE contributions

The lifecycle of The Hive has coincided with a transformation in the landscape of HE. As such, my detailing of The Hive’s stories and daily life allows inferences to be made about how higher education is experienced in public today. Sociologists of HE have understandably tended to look at the university and its activities – through finances, teaching, and engagement – as areas through which to assess HE. However valid, these foci - and even those that extend

slightly beyond the university site, as in community engagement activities – often presuppose a distinction between the categories of “public” and “academic”. While this distinction exists and is crucial, it is often not acknowledged or defined, and remains somewhat overlooked – like the library itself. A contribution of my thesis is to make the case for dwelling in these points of distinction as they are found, in the library, out in the community. Doing so affords opportunity to gauge the reception and reach of HE as it exists out in public space, seeing the library as an archive of engagement with collected public knowledge.

By dwelling at these points of contact, conflict, and conviviality I have contributed insights into this greatly overlooked arena of “public” and “academic” distinctions. One aspect that became clear through my ethnography is the extent to which the domains of “public” and “academic” are shaped in live encounters, encounters which are negotiated, fickle and contingent. The way the integration project was referred to at different levels of the organisation – discussed in chapter three – is a case in point. The uncomfortable disparities of voices etched into the shelves via blue stickers is another. Throughout, the slipperiness of labels and demarcations between university going and non-university going publics, goods, and staffs revealed that these labels are subjective, emotive, and often a little confused. These negotiated classifications revealed the extent to which infrastructural delineations (budgets, memberships, usage statistics) represented only one level of the integration project’s aims, and advocates for more research into the lived experiences of these unassuming spaces.

In addition to highlighting the contingency of the public/academic divide, my engagement at and across these boundaries allows broader inferences to be made about just how *public* higher education is. Often, the signs did not feel great; instances at all levels of The Hive (Institutional, professional, affective) highlighted how far (higher) education as a generalisable element of public life has moved from the view of those engaged in that public. That there was a real perceived need to manage the sometimes-competing needs and voices of non-university and university going members of the public highlighted a discomfort which was present yet unacknowledged. More powerful for me, though, were the unexpected instances of reluctance and discomfort that permeated at the building’s boundary space; groups of men unable to broach the doorway, members of the public hurriedly informing me they “never read the books”. More than just existing, some demarcations of difference between The Hive’s partners appeared to be important meaning-making practices for those engaged in them. Articulating difference in the face of integration – a process I coined classification/convergence – seemed important for those wishing to preserve a precarious



relational “worth” against their neighbours. There is perhaps a general and a specific point to made here in relation to the crisis of HE. On the one hand, of course, “to classify is human” (Bowker and Leigh Star, 1999, p.1), and such practices are how we all make sense of the world. But it is also pertinent that these practices of classification happen noticeably in a context of individualised and marketized HE. The need to classify difference is strong where public education is threatened.

That said, we have also seen how the live negotiation of public and academic worth through classificatory practices has many productive and positive impacts. Instances of play and shared experience across symbolic and material boundaries abounded in the space of The Hive. Though problematic, the blue stickers policy grew in reaction to the fact that The Hive’s integrated promise was so popular; people were so up for boundary crossing having been given the opportunity. Instances of communities and individuals negotiating space together in the “sunseat” also showed the potential for public space in general. Not only does my research show that meaningful public engagement between the general public and academic institutions is possible, desirable, and productive, it also orients these engagements towards everyday practices, everyday outcomes, ordinary empathy. These empirical and orientational insights can be developed further by other researchers not only interested in sociology of HE, but also any policy makers concerned with public engagement in HE.

While The Hive may not be straightforwardly representative of the rest of the HE landscape in terms of institutional structure, my work underlines the complexity of approach required when considering any HE institution, and any public engagement programme. I argue that the playing out of professions, structures, and encounters with knowledge reveal something fundamental about the state of HE in public, whether in the “extreme” case of The Hive or in more traditional university libraries. The possibility of HE in public – and the substantial challenges to it – lies in the case of The Hive, not beyond it. If classificatory practices variously depicting the persisting importance of demarcating difference abound in The Hive, a project explicitly working to undo them, there is every reason to think they would be etched into public spaces nationwide. Focusing on one library as a container of processes, perhaps surprisingly, underscored the importance of viewing changes to HE in a wider societal context.

### **Public services under austerity; worth as relational, classification as productive**

Having discussed my contributions to sociology literature concerning crises in public higher education, I now turn to the crises of public services, which I set up in chapter two as being

both more “ongoing” and quotidian than the drama that the word “crisis” suggests. In many ways, my work’s contributions in the adjacent area of debates concerning public services under austerity build on those relating to HE precisely because here I also seek to take the same expansive and over spilling perspective on public institutions. Nevertheless, some specific points of contribution can be drawn which I will detail below: firstly, my research develops “crisis” literature through offering a further empirical case study of austerity as an emotional and affect-orientated process rather than a straightforwardly financial one, and highlights the library as a complex and key institution within this. Secondly, I highlight how the increasingly differential experiences of public service provision through austerity, and its narrowing within the site of the library is further affected by differential work patterns.

My study prioritised slow and iterative periods of observation, interaction, and reflection. In so doing, the ethnography provided a gateway to better observing the sensorial and rhythmic experience of negotiating public space at a time of austerity. Following Berlant’s call to lateral politics as “a commitment to the present activity of the senses” (Berlant, 2011, p.261) I was able to reflect on moments, emotions, and exchanges while speaking to their relationship within a wider political context. Doing so helped build up a picture of public space and public education in the UK today as a space of live negotiation and complexity. I showed the multifaceted and emotional nature of austerity: rather than any enduring and dominant story, individuals interacted with material and symbolic boundaries in the library space and expressions of worth and belonging varied with the experiences they brought with them. As we saw with the prominence of men struggling to cross the threshold of The Hive, or those who visibly struggled with the stuff of life when they did, experiences of austerity are often low-level, mundane, and enmeshed within other rhythms of the day. I showed that the library could be a mediating, reparative container for these often heavy experiences. Pain and discomfort were visibly alleviated – temporarily at least – when conviviality and empathetic encounter had the space and chance to take root. As with the foregoing discussion about the crisis of HE, classificatory practices and boundary crossings sharpened events. Acknowledging both the work of public feelings theorists (Berlant, 2011; Cvetkovich, 2003, 2012; Stewart, 2007, 2008, 2011), and the recent contributions of ethnographies in libraries (Corble, 2019; Hitchin, 2019; Robinson 2014), I therefore build a rich picture of the importance of classificatory practices and boundary work to the ways people navigate the emotional space of austerity.

My second distinct contribution to conversations within the sociology of public spaces under austerity is in highlighting the emotional effect of increasingly merged, integrated and

outsourced functions of public services for those working in them, and by consequence those receiving them. The Hive brings together not only university and council library services, but also different modes of work within them. Though perhaps “extreme” at The Hive, the expectation for council services like public libraries to take up the slack as other sites of public life are closed, threatened or transformed (youth centres, dedicated council service centres, job centres, Citizens Advice Bureaus) is pervasive in Britain today. This brings an obvious pressure and stress to the services provided. But I also showed that it effects how people employed in those services understand their work, their worth through work, and how they relate to service users. By studying The Hive at multiple levels (lenses) with thoughts of emotional labour, New Public Management, and affect theory in mind, the effects of professionalisms in proximity revealed several things about public services under austerity. Firstly, that occupational identity matters, even and especially as formal access to professions (such as librarianship) is complicated by the pincer movement of technology and professionalism. Secondly, I showed in the context of merged services that establishing and communicating difference was often important to those working in different streams of professionalisation. Finally, in thinking through the variety of occupational structures – apprentices, volunteers, outsourced, professional – I showed how any culture of integration – equality – is fundamentally limited when material recognition of work is unequal. I hope here to have demonstrated the broader applicability of my research and thus shown the potential for my work to inform further studies exploring these relationships and their emotional outcomes in the context of other universities, libraries and public services.

### “Slow methods” contribution and reflection

I have so far discussed my contributions relating to empirical insights – in terms of the sociology of HE and studies in the effects of austerity. I now want to turn to two areas of contribution which speak to the manner through which these insights were enabled. These contributions firstly concern my approach to live methods through “slow methods” and the three Ds of dwelling, doodling, and describing, and secondly to my development of concepts around classification and classificatory practices. I begin this section by reflecting on my journey into slow and live methods and the development of its features, arguing that engaging honestly with shyness gave way to valuable insight that allowed attunement to atmospheric and rhythmic fluctuations. Secondly, I reflect on areas where I would like this methodology to develop, highlighting an interest in taking the 3Ds approach out into the field and building in more participative elements. Finally, I point to further sites and interests that researchers might like to use slow methods for.

My approach was born partly of necessity – as I wrote in chapter three, I struggled with the emotions I felt at The Hive, and I struggled with the idea of talking to strangers. I knew I wanted to do ethnography, and I knew that ethnographers needed to be familiar with the field, needed to engage with it. I knew that I couldn't hope to render the stories and lives of The Hive by only observing it from the outside. Interviews felt OK, they had form and purpose and parameters; they had predictability. But ethnographic interviews and the forwardness they presuppose felt initially very difficult. Thankfully I overcame that specific aversion, as I recount through my engagement with Sue in chapter three. However, more usefully, I used this stuck moment to reflect more deeply on what my slow approach to The Hive did allow, which a seemingly shyness-free ethnographic research would not have done. Slow and low-intervention entry into the field was beneficial for making me hyper aware of atmospheric rhythms and their changes. My disposition meant that at times I bristled as I observed punctuations to otherwise quiet days. What I might have labelled "over-thinking" was a value in reflecting on these incidences, on what it meant to approach people in public space, on what it meant for different workers with different pay and credentials to respond to strangers.

I also came to think that I couldn't be alone, that the shyness or awkwardness I felt approaching strangers was not wholly mine but could be read as an underacknowledged reality for many researchers and many people. This shyness is not necessarily something to be overcome – part of the gift of The Hive, of informal and open learning spaces in general, are to be found in those low-key joyful moments where guards fall, and empathy is shared. Rather, it can be embraced as a way of relating faithfully with others. This is of benefit to ethnographic methods research, and it also led to the development of my "slow" methods which complemented and extended my disposition and research aims.

Being "slow" and "shy" in a sense was just about listening and being responsive to change and pace and rhythm. If dwelling came naturally through the aversions and processes highlighted above, then doodling came as a method through which to engage and analyse the multi-layered scene as I found it. As I explained in chapter three there were three "types" of doodle: familiarisation and settling doodles to ease myself into the field; reflective cartoons where I analyse my reactions to particularly strong features; and informational diagrams, where I make sense of flows of organisation, money, power, knowledge within the organisation. Doodles didn't make sense in every lens, and I resisted the urge to shoehorn more in when I realised that certain chapters (chapter five particularly) was less doodle heavy than others. My feeling is they worked best when they were spontaneous sense-making

activities. Engaging with the micro emotions and complications of the library floor 3 in chapter six benefitted from a cacophony of methods. Perhaps it is telling of some residual occupational identity work of my own that it was the chapter on librarian professional identity and its trajectories that I included no speculative doodling: did an attempt to show my own, serious, assured knowledge of librarianship, free from the revealing nature of drawing come in a bit there? Possibly. Equally, I think I just felt that that chapter was healthily infused with text, talk, and reflective description.

Finally, I hope that my inclusion of description as a methodological ingredient contributes to the development of ethnographic live methods. In a field of artful, creative, and playful approaches, my guiding lights have been those whose writing enlivens the research. In this thesis, consciously writing in descriptive ways slowed and enriched the stories of The Hive, and allowed the multi-faceted emotionality of the space – through me – to be evoked.

I would like to develop my three Ds approach with greater iterative involvement from the research participants. Although I sought to gauge reaction through ethnographic interviews, semi-structured interviews, and through the 3Ds of my live and slow approach, I acknowledge that to a great extent these reactions were my own, or were my – albeit triangulated – reflections on the reactions of others. My research could have taken different directions, and one to consider for the future could be around building in more active participation from the community I am embedded within: could I have asked some of the young men hanging around outside the library to comment on my doodle of the expletive strewn boundary space? Could I have held a feedback focus group for staff at The Hive (beyond my reports back to management) following my interview sessions and initial analysis? Perhaps through holding a workshop and feedback event with members of staff on my classificatory conceptual repertoire and 3Ds slow methods, I could have asked them to go off on their own ethnographic meanderings around the building and feedback their reflections. In terms of what I have produced here, I don't feel my analysis has been lacking major insights that might have been gained in this way. However, as I have grown through and with this research experience – in the field and in the “live art of sociology” (Lambert, 2018) – I would like to experiment further in expressing my inferences creatively, and working with creative responses to them by library users. Doing so is part of a continuing commitment to live methods, and also to the belief that research participants have the capacity to be critically self-reflective, and that this would be beneficial to both them and my research.

### The classification scheme: reflections and contributions of thinking with classification

The foregoing discussion of my thesis' contributions to literatures of sociology of HE and sociology of public services under austerity have included reference to my conceptual framework that they are enmeshed with. The following section turns more explicitly to these concepts and how I developed them through fieldwork and analysis. I will describe the strengths and illuminating features of this framework and then reflect on its contributions of sociological theory, beyond the site of the library.

Thinking with classification grew originally out of the very specific circumstances of the library space and began almost as a sociological theory pun. With libraries being essentially borne of classification schemes, and the added nod of classification to *class* itself, "classification" as an organising concept had a pleasingly neat feel to it. But it was also an organising concept – or repertoire of connected concepts - that extended beyond what I originally anticipated its reach to be. In chapter two I discussed the implications of libraries as classificatory spaces through reference to the literatures of Foucault, Benjamin, and also Bowker and Leigh Star, as well as Critical LIS concerned with remedying problematic subject headings. Here I described the understanding that every classification scheme amplifies one voice and silences another; every classification scheme is incomplete; every classification scheme could be otherwise. These premises certainly found ample voice in The Hive. But my experience with that library and with classification also overstepped that knowledge orientated role. Thinking with classification in terms of peoples and their interactions with knowledge, interactions with each other and with themselves, all seemed to speak to classification and classificatory practices beyond an organised knowledge-based schema. The notion of practice made clear the extent to which classifications have meaning only in their live negotiation, in their reception and communication by individuals and groups. Thinking with classification from the shelves, to the communities, and back again highlighted the fact that classificatory practices and the creation of classifications permeate social life. They are always relational, can be contradictory, temporary, confused.

In pursuing this line, and as I described above with regard to contributions to debates in HE and public service research, thinking with these concepts illuminated the mediation of space in the library by its communities through boundary work and internalised conceptions of worth. Here, I have developed both the practice orientated schema of Bowker and Leigh Star by extending classification beyond organised knowledge, and into everyday encounters. As I said in chapter one, "worth" bubbled out of my field notes in observations, with Alan Bennett's cocktail party feeling in mind. Worth added emotional and affective texture to the

practices of negotiation and boundary work I observed, which often pivoted on subtle power relations and varying engagements with in/visibility and public/private feelings.

In the context of my research, this conceptual framework worked to illuminate the social life of classifications in a classificatory space, attending to the overlooked meetings, joins and creases of sense making in the singular space of the library. Beyond this research though, my hope is that the schema of classification and its attendant processes are an area where the logic of the library speaks back to the field of sociology and could be developed beyond this specific site. As ever-increasing spaces of public life are subject to mergers, convergence, and overstretched-overlap, using classification as a lens through which to track the affective outcomes of such transformations may prove illuminative to studies beyond the library. The final section of this chapter will turn to further possibilities here, both for my own future research agenda and for other researchers’.

## **Reflections and conclusions for future research**

I have already pointed to a number of avenues for future research and expressed a hope that my engagement with methods and theory will be applicable to further researchers in similar fields to mine. The university campus itself and specific spaces within it have relevance to thinking about HE in public and the crises associated with it. As, increasingly, a service provider beyond its core educational remit, the university itself presents several spaces where the negotiated nature of the public/academic divide could provide insight into the state and status of public HE. These could include the students’ union, public lecture series and summer schools, university arts programmes, and others. On the other side of the same coin, further research could focus on public libraries which – unlike The Hive – do not have specific connections to universities. Further, adjacent cultural institutions like museums and art galleries could also be recognised as being containers for exploring academic knowledge in public. Attending to them in ways that dwell affectively with classifications and memberships is productive for understanding public space and the challenge of lateral politics.

For myself, I have two elements of development identified for future research, one empirical and one methodological. The methodological development of my future research agenda will involve building in the iterative and participative elements of slow methods mentioned above. The empirical one will be in broadening the scope of my analysis through more diverse sites. Having studied an “extreme” case study in the site of The Hive and having argued extensively that it can be seen as a lens through which public space and public higher

education more generally can be observed, future research of mine will turn to library sites of varying contexts. Drawing on the case study of The Hive, my thesis developed a framework for understanding negotiation in public spaces and public engagement with academic knowledge using concepts of classification, classificatory practices, and worth. The aim of my new research will be to develop a broader methodological and empirical scope to similar research questions. I propose a multi-site ethnography at several further university settings. While maintaining an interpretative rather than explanatory approach, my new research will make further inroads into understanding the ways communities negotiate “places of learning” (Ellsworth, 2004) across different institutional and geographical settings. These might include looking at library engagement processes on campuses in larger and more diverse city settings than Worcester. It might also involve looking to other variations of shared-use experiments with different institutional configurations to The Hive. Picking up on the points raised in chapter two in reference to projects in the US and northern Europe, I could also turn to international comparisons. A multi-site and inventively comparative ethnography could give further insight into the nature of classificatory practices and their involvement in the creation of the public.

## Leaving the Hive

In walking away from The Hive, and in concluding this thesis, I think of the challenges facing The Hive and institutions like it. As public services across Britain are increasingly squeezed and expected to play multiple roles in public life, those challenges are, unfortunately, great. However, if The Hive serves as an example of the many challenges facing the public, it must also be understood as a vibrant and hopeful new chapter.

I end with the words of one of The Hive’s managers which encapsulates much of its complex hope, and of its futures:

*Linda: You know, [humans] are a territorial species and we instinctively do colonise, and create little, little cliquey areas, don't we? And it's a constant battle to see those [cliques] and fight against them, I guess.*

*Katherine: I guess that is a real gift of The Hive's situation, that you're placed to see those things...it might be something you have to revisit, but Worcester is a very good example of the effort*

*Linda: Yes, and I'm very determined to keep it that way.*



*(Linda, Manager, Interview)*

## Appendix 1 - Interview questions for liaison librarians

### About me

- Interested in how people use academic libraries today
- How education is constituted and shared in space
- What is made possible by the space, contents, and interactions, and teaching
- Role of 'librarianship' today in UK HE
- How a joint-use library with converged services affects these questions, especially in relation to UK HE generally, the idea of the public university, and reproduction of neoliberalism/capitalism/whatever.

### Personal about job

- What was your journey into this job? (training, education, previous roles)
- Have you worked in other libraries besides the Hive? (academic, public?)
- Were you working for the previous libraries (either Uni of Worcester or Worcester County Council) when the Hive opened?
  - If yes:
- How did you feel about the plans for the Hive when they came about
- Can you identify any broad changes between the old library and the Hive - 'visions', culture, staffing etc
- How would you describe the transition
  - If no:
- What attracted you to the role you have now, how did it seem different to where you were before?

- How important was the converged library idea to you wanting your job/what else do you like about the Hive etc.
- What library networks are you in, and what do you use them for? If not, why? CILIP etc.

#### About job

- How would you describe the values of the Hive?
- Why do you think the Hive is a converged library?
- Who benefits from it?
- What is the most important part of your job?
- Do you think it varies from what your manager would say?
- What do you find most satisfying in your job, and do you have enough opportunity to pursue that thing?
- What values do you think it is important to have as a librarian in an academic library today?
- Is it important for you to have a passion for the subject(s) you are liaison librarian for?
- What are your priorities when you teach students information literacy (e.g. 1 use of library services like catalogue, databases, locations, referencing etc, 2 holistic view of information and how to select, evaluate and use it, 3 would like to do 2 but only have time for 1, is reflective practice a part of how you teach or what you think yourself?)
- If you had the freedom to give several classes without curriculum/syllabus constraints, what would you like to cover?
- Is there anything you would love to do in your job that you aren't able to now, why not, how important is it to you?
- How do you think the changed structure of HE funding has affected the expectations of students, management, you? E.g. corporate subject, employability

- Do you think you would have capacity within your current role to include wider discussions about what students are at uni for, their wider educational journeys in Worcester
- About personal.
  - What things are important to you beyond the place you work?
  - Are your own personal political values important factors in deciding the work you choose to do? (/not/not a big choice)
  - How do you feel your personal political values and your professional values interact on a day to day basis?
  - Are you active in the Worcester community/wherever you live? In what ways?
  - How would you describe yourself politically?
  - Do you feel able to open personally at work, is that important to you?

## Appendix 2 - Ethnography at the Hive Information Sheet

Katherine Quinn | University of Warwick | Department of Sociology |  
K.Quinn.1@warwick.ac.uk

**Supervisor:** Professor Gurminder K Bhambra | G.K.Bhambra@warwick.ac.uk

**Ethics contact:** Dr Lynne Pettinger | L.Pettinger@warwick.ac.uk

**Date of estimated PhD thesis completion:** December 2019

### **Aim and context:**

The research aims to understand the role of academic libraries as spaces which can potentially contribute to the fostering of public, social, and critical education. I'm interested in the role, function and potential of academic libraries today, and how their changing roles affect the culture of Higher Education (HE) and communities more broadly. The context for the study is the recent changes to the structure of HE in England (lower central government funding and higher individualised fees) and the concurrent effect these changes potentially have on the status of HE in the public imagination. Libraries are understood to be spaces where self-led, critical and serendipitous learning take place, and where encounters between different people and publics enable deeper and more empathetic learning within and among communities.

I'm especially interested in the Hive because of its unique position as a converged academic and public library, and would like to experience how this works in practice, and what it means for members of the public and academic communities engaging with the library. I am particularly looking at ideas of built pedagogy, library instruction, collections, and library practices.

### **Interview and data:**

As well as a methodology of naturalistic observational ethnography, I also want to interview key staff members about their role and experiences of academic libraries

and HE. These semi-structured interviews are intended to last around 40 minutes. Participation is completely voluntary and interviewees can withdraw at any time. The data collected from the interview will be in the form of a voice recording and electronic transcript which will be secured on a password protected drive.

Interview data will be used in the data analysis and writing up of the eventual thesis, and may be quoted directly. Names of participants would ideally be used to identify quotations but this can be negotiated and agreed. Furthermore, sections of the thesis which refer to the work of interviewed participants can be shared and approved of by the participant in advance of submission.

## Appendix 3 – Research Participation consent form

### Ethnography at the Hive Consent form

**Katherine Quinn | University of Warwick | Department of Sociology |**

**Supervisor: Dr Cath Lambert |**

**Research ethics contact:** Dr Lynne Pettinger |

**Title:** Integrated knowledges, integrated publics? Classificatory practices, boundary crossings, and elevating empathetic learning at the Hive, Worcester.

I have been informed of and understand the purposes of the study	
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions	
I understand I can withdraw at any time without prejudice	
I agree to participate in the study as outlined to me	
I have agreed for data to be attributed to me by:	
First name only:	
Full name:	
Category and pseudonym (e.g., Sally, manager):	

## **Appendix 4 - Whatdotheyknow.com Freedom of information request**

**Original FOI request from University of Worcester student to University of Worcester  
11/11/2012**

Dear University of Worcester,

This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act. I hereby request copies of documents containing the following information:

1. University's financial contribution to the construction of the Hive.
2. The yearly on-going cost to the University of the Hive.
3. The duration of the University's ongoing obligation to fund the Hive.
4. The identity of the organisation that currently owns the majority of the collection of books and journals that were previously in Pierson Library.
5. The financial consideration that university received for providing books and journals to the Hive.

In addition please provide:

6. Copies of all communication between the University and other Hive project partners regarding the provision of parking for students at the Hive.
7. Copies of all documents or communications that refer to the discrepancies between the build cost of the Hive (which the "construction costs analysis" states is £39,381,395), the support grant (given in the "Final Business Case" as £79,835m) and the £60m figure used in the University's publicity materials.



I should prefer to receive these in electronic format, however, I am happy to receive them by post if that is more convenient.

If the information requested contains sections of confidential information, please blank out or remove these sections, and mark clearly that they have been removed.

If the provision of all the documents requested under points 6 and 7 above would cause this request to incur fees, or require so much administrative work as to be unreasonable to answer in full, I will accept as many relevant documents as can be found in 1 hour as a sufficient answer.

Yours faithfully,

.....

**Response 1 from University of Worcester 04/12/2012**

Dear

Further to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act our response is as follows:

1. The construction and servicing of the Hive has been funded using a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangement. The partners (Worcestershire County Council and the University of Worcester) have contracted with the private construction and development company, Galliford Try, to build and run the building on their behalf for the period of the contract. As such the University has not made a financial contribution specifically to meet the construction of the building - this is paid for through the annual unitary charge over the term of the contract.

2. An initial payment of £9,658,000 (inc. VAT) was made which serves to reduce the ongoing annual service charge. Current annual charge of £456,857 (inc. VAT at base line figures)

3. The duration of the agreement is 25 years

4. The University of Worcester currently owns the books that were originally in the Pierson Library. No transfer of books took place and all University books have been relocated to the Hive.

5. N/A - the books and journals are still owned by the University

6. There has been no correspondence referring specifically to parking at the Hive.

7. These are not discrepancies but figures that relate to different elements of expenditure:-

a) the construction cost at financial close was £37,881,395. This was the estimated costs of the construction of the build and did not include all PFI contract costs (such as fees, fit out, equipment, etc)

b) The £60m figure referred to the planned cost of the build and all associated costs of bringing the building into service, which was included in the original business plan of £56.7m. This differs from the construction costs due to land acquisition costs, fees, ICT equipment (which lay outside the PFI contract), external works such as archaeology and site clearance

c) The £79m figure refers to the actual costs borne by the partners after HEFCE grant funding and PFI credits. This is the unitary charge over the full term (less credits and grant funding). This includes lease interest payable to the PFI contractor over the project term.

Regards

**Further response from student 07/12/2012**

Informally:

My eventual intention is to petition to the council to make improvements to the Hive for the benefit of students. My freedom of information request is intended to ensure that this petition asks for things that could actually be delivered without breaking contracts or incurring unreasonable financial costs. Knowing how the Hive project was structured financially would reveal how much political clout the university could theoretically bring to bear on the council, and what students might reasonably ask for.

As trying to find solid financial and contractual information on the Hive without using FoI requests has proved impossible, I strongly suspect the council may be bound by confidentiality agreements with contractor(s). I therefore approached the university with my request rather than the council, as you will also hold similar documents, and might be able to reveal them. I have used an FoI request rather than simply asking, in order to protect the university in the event of the council objecting to you providing me with this information; the university can simply respond that you were legally obliged under FoI to give me the information.

As always with FoI requests, it's difficult for the requester to know which documents would be useful, without knowing precisely which documents an organisation holds, or the names the organisation gives those documents. This means that asking about things that might be mentioned in those documents and requesting the whole of those documents is often the best research strategy.

Formally:

Any documents at all dated before the date of my original question that contain the information given in your first reply would fulfil my request. The university is free to use its discretion to pick ones if multiple such documents exist.

Yours sincerely,

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